A Vindication

of Some Truths of

Natural and Revealed

Religion:

In Answer to the

False Reasoning of Mr. James Foster on

Various Subjects

by John Brine

(London: A. Ward, 1746)

To which is added,

A Dialogue between a Calvinist, a Socinian, an Arminian, a Baxterian, and a Deist. Wherein the chief Arguments, for the Support of each Scheme, are advanced: And the most material Objections, against Calvinism, are answered. In this Dialogue, the Reader may clearly discover the small Difference there is between Baxterianism, and Arminianism; and how Arminiansm leads to Socinianism, and that to Deism.

BY JOHN BRINE

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THE PREFACE

MANY seem to account it the Glory of this inquisitive *and* enlightened *Age, that Religion is thought to contain nothing* mysterious, *or above the Comprehension of Men. It must, I think, be confessed, that herein they widely differ from the Sentiments of the Generality of Christians, who lived in former Times. A little Enquiry will convince us, that this Conceit arises not from a real Improvement in Knowledge, but from a very* superficial *and* partial *Examination of religious Principles.*

For it is as demonstrable, that Religion is founded in Mystery; *as it is evident to Reason, that there is a God. If I mistake not, it is fully proved in the following Sheets, that the Principles of natural Religion in great Part are* mysterious, *or* incomprehensible: *And that it is so far from being true, that Religion ends where a Mystery begins, that on the contrary, there it Commences.*

'*Tis not in the least Degree dishonorable to our Reason to assert, that there are Truths, which demand our most religions Regard, whose Nature far exceeds our Comprehension. It can't be so, if it is rational to believe the Existence of a Being, who is infinitely above us. Which at*

present, I suppose, may be taken for granted. But how long this will be allowed by some Men, I shall not pretend to say.

The Distinction of Things above, and contrary to Reason, is just and true. The former are Mysteries, the latter are Absurdities. 'Tis often affirmed, that our Principles are of the latter Sort. If they be so indeed, then we must either contradict and renounce our Reason in believing them; or not use it, or not bare a sufficient Degree of Reason to discover the Absurdity of those Principles. I cannot be persuaded, that a considerable Share of Sense is necessary to discover an Absurdity; and if it is not, then without the Vanity of fancying ourselves, to be equal in Discernment, to the very rational Gentlemen, *who pronounce our Opinions absurd; it might be apprehended, that we are capable of discerning their Absurdity, provided, we exercised that lower Degree of Reason we have. This we profess to do, and in Fact we do it; but we cannot possibly discover, that they are in the least contradictory to Reason; and, therefore, we are almost tempted to imagine, that those* Gentlemen *do not so much exceed us in good Sense, as in Prejudice, Pride and Arrogance.*

If Man is a fallen Creature, he is not what God made him, nor bears his Image. I cannot but think, that a little Attention to the Dispositions and Acts of our Minds will be sufficient to convince us, that we are far from being such, as a virtuous and holy Man wishes to be. The Happiness of an intelligent

Creature, must very much consist in the Regularity of its Thoughts, the Purity of its Desires, and the Refinement of its Pleasures. If there is any one Man in the World, whose Thoughts are exactly regular, or always employed upon such Subjects, as it is proper they should be, and suitable to that Relation in which he stands to the great Creator, and the different Relations, he bears to those of his own Species, without starting aside from those important Subjects, and running on others, which are vain, idle and sinful: Whose Desires are pure, and absolutely refrained from all criminal Excess, that perpetually flow in a right Channel, and only center in what it is wise and fit to wish for the Possession of: Whose Pleasures are truly noble, whose Delight is in God, as the chief Good, and not at all in the Creature, but as a real Good, derived from him, and altogether under that Consideration; I say, if there is such a Man in the World, he stands distinguished from all others in Happiness, whether he is a Prince or a Peasant; and is what I should wish to be. But alas! no such Man is to be found among us; and, consequently,

All Men are Transgressors, and if Punishment in Justice is due to a Breach of Duty, then the whole human Species are subject to Penalty, and must be in a miserable State. Reason itself affords us evident Proof of this melancholy Truth. But Reason cannot discover how a guilty Creature may recover its Holiness and Happiness. Revelation alone acquaints us with the Method of Salvation; but as that Method hides Pride

from Man, and obliges us to an Acknowledgement of our great Guiltiness, Depravity, and Unworthiness, and utter Incapacity to contribute in any Measure to our Recovery from deferred Ruin, Men can't be reconciled to it. They are very unwilling to allow, that they have destroyed *themselves, and that in God* alone *is their Help. These are the two principal Things in Dispute between Mr.* Foster *and myself.*

I am willing to hope, that not only the miserable Condition of Men by Nature, is proved; but also, that Salvation is of God alone, and entirely, if these two things are done, I shall rejoice; because to contribute, as far as I am able, to the Conviction of Men, of their wretched State by Nature, and to direct them to look for Help and Succor from the God of all Grace, through the Mediation of Jesus Christ, that God and the Redeemer may share the whole Praise of their Salvation, I hope, is the Height of myAmbition.

With respect to the Dialogue, which I have added to what is wrote in Answer to Mr. Foster, *some it may be, will censure it very heavily, because an Attempt is therein made to prove, that* Baxterianism *leads directly to* Arminianism; *they may perhaps do this out of an Esteem for the Memory of Mr.* Baxter, *and from an Apprehension not only of his Piety, but of the Piety of many, who embrace his Scheme. To which, I would answer three Things, First, I hope Piety is not confined wholly to his Principles: Without the least Reflection on him or his Followers; I think it may be allowed, that the*

first Reformers, who thought the Doctrine of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ alone to be of the greatest Importance, were not his Inferiors in Piety, nor behind any of his Followers, in real Holiness and the Power of Religion, Secondly, I am free to say, it is not the Piety of any Person, that gains my Assent to his Principles, if they are not to be supported by Scripture, I shall always think myself, at full Liberty to reject them, how great an Opinion soever I may have of his religious Temper and Deportment. Thirdly, I can't but think, that any Man, who will allow himself impartially to consider Mr. Baxter's *Sentiments, and compare them with* Arminian *Principles, he will soon discover, that they naturally tend to* Arminianism. *And what is melancholy to express, the Fact is capable of full Proof, from many Churches, who have first fallen into* Baxterianism, *and then sunk into direct* Arminianism, *which in Reality is at no great Remove from* Socinianism; *so that we have now, numerous Dissenters, whose Belief can hardly be called by a better Name, and it may be expected, that in a little time, we shall have Numbers of Dissenters turn Deists. I fear it; I wish my Fears may prove groundless.*

Another thing, I would observe is, some it is probable may not like this way of Writing, through a Suspicion that Partiality is used in the Management of the Debate. I must confess, that this is too often done in Dialogues, which has not a little prejudiced me against this Method of Writing. But I beg leave to say, that I have not offered any thing, in a way

of Argument on the Socinian, Arminian, *or* Baxterian *Principles, but what has been said by the Parties themselves*; *and their Books are almost always referred to, and, I hope, the Reader will not see Cause to charge me with neglecting to express the strongest Things, which they have advanced in Favor of their Sentiments. This I am sure, I may say, that to my Knowledge, I have not in a single Instance, been guilty of such an Omission. If what is penn'd, may be useful to guard any against Soul destroying Errors, or convince Gainsayers, or confirm, in the least Degree, the Faith of the Saints, I shall rejoice*: *And desire, that God may have the Praise.*

Chapter One of Mysteries

MR. *Foster,* in treating on the Subject of Mysteries, stiffly maintains, that there are, *properly* speaking, no Mysteries in Religion. He seems to apprehend, that he has effectually set aside every Article of the Christian Faith, which is of a mysterious Nature. Before I enter upon the Consideration of what he advances on this subject, I apprehend, it is necessary to give the Reader a clear Account, of what is intended by a Mystery, when the Term is applied to the Principles of natural and revealed Religion: Or what it is we mean, when we say that those Principles are mysterious.

1. By a Mystery we do not intend any absurd Doctrine; or any Principle which is contrary to Reason, and contradicts what we certainly know, by our Senses, must be true. That some *nominal* Christians, *viz.* the *Papists,* have advanced absurd Principles, such as are repugnant to Reason and Sense, is well known; and that they impose upon Men, the Belief of those Principles, under a Pretense of Mystery, is too notorious to admit of the least Doubt. The Doctrine of Transubstantiation, for Instance, is contrary to all Reason and Sense: It requires us to believe, that a Multitude of Miracles are wrought, without the least Appearance of any Change, in that, whereon, they are effected, as they are pleased to tell us. This Doctrine therefore, is no Mystery, but a manifest Absurdity.

2. We do not mean by a Mystery, any thing unknown, as to its Being and Truth: Or we do not imagine, that some particular Things are, of whose Being and Truth we have no Evidence. Such an Imagination is exceeding weak; for that is no other than to believe, that a Thing is, without any Proof at all, of its Being or Truth. And, therefore, were we to believe the Being of that Thing, whether in Fact it is, or it is not, our Belief that it is, must be entirely without Foundation; consequently, how much soever we might be persuaded, that such a Thing is; at present, tho' that Thing may really be, our Persuasion that it is, can have nothing to support it. *But,*

3. What we mean by a Mystery is this: That the Nature of a Thing, which we have clear Evidence really is, either from Reason or Revelation, is above our Comprehension. We cannot understand how it is, tho' we most certainly know that in Fact it is. Clear Ideas we may have of the Being, or Truth of a Thing, notwithstanding, we may be utterly unable to explain the Nature and Mode of it. This is what we intend by a Mystery, when we use the Word on religious Subjects.

And I dare venture to assert, that if Mr. *Foster,* will not allow, that some Things must be believed to be true, the Nature of which he cannot explain, he will be driven into direct *Atheism,* that he will unavoidably be compelled to renounce, not only revealed, but natural Religion also, and be obliged to embrace the most *palpable* Absurdities. Men may flourish as much as they please, in arguing against Mysteries in Religion, and, by so doing, they may perhaps obtain with *Superficial* Thinkers the Character of ingenious Reasoners; but, if they are in earnest, I am confident, that they must embrace what is most evidently absurd and irrational. There is no Medium, I am certain; we must either believe what we cannot account for, or we must be persuaded of that, which, if we will attend to the plainest Dictates of our Reason, we shall clearly discern cannot possibly be true. The Reader will find, in considering what Mr. *Foster* delivers, that this is plain Truth, and that he is not in Fact against Mysteries in Religion; for the whole amount of his Reasoning on this Subject, is only this; that Religion don't oblige us to explain

what is, in its Nature inexplicable; which is as evident a Truth, as that two and two make four. Some, it may be, will entertain an Opinion, that he really has some Adversary to deal with, and that he hath obtain'd a glorious Victory; but it is wholly a Mistake. He has no Opponent except in his own Imagination: The Conquest he has gain'd, is only over a Man of Straw, which he was pleased to make up, unmercifully to beat and kick about, for his Diversion, as long as he thought proper. Having explain'd what a Mystery is: That it is some Truth which exceeds our Comprehension: I proceed to show,

First, that there are some mysterious Truths, which Reason clearly suggests to us, as,

1. A Duration without Beginning. Such a Duration we know must necessarily have been; because it is absurd to conceive, that all Duration commenced, for it must commence, either by the Will of God, or by the Will of a Creature: If by the Will of God, then, God was, when there was no Duration: If by the Will of a Creature, then, the Creature must be before Time, or Duration, wherein it exists, which is impossible.

2. That God is an eternal and necessary Being; that he ever was, and that he is not by the Will of another, for then he could not be God; but must be a dependent and precarious Being: Not by his own Will, for this necessarily supposes, that his Will was prior to himself.

3. That all created Beings once were not, and that they were made out of nothing. That no Creature could exist from Eternity is evident; for that which eternally existed, owes its Being to no Cause; it must therefore be independent and subject to none; and that which is so, will necessarily remain for ever, what it is without any Mutation. And, therefore, whatever is created, had originally no Principle of which it was form'd. How Matter should rise into Being out of nothing, is to us absolutely inexplicable: And yet, if we will not run into the most manifest Absurdities, we must believes that it was produced out of a Non-entity.

4. That all Creatures were formed in a measurable Duration, which is taken out of an immeasurable eternal Duration. As it is impossible for us to measure such a Duration; so we cannot conceive in what Point of that Duration Time began: Or imagine how a Duration that has Beginning, is taken out of a Duration, which had none. For let us conceive all imaginable Number of Ages to have run on, in a Duration without Commencement, we shall still be at an infinite Distance from determining in what Point of that Duration Time began. And, therefore, Eternity, a *Parte ante,* is no other than a negative Idea, or it is we know not what. Tho' we cannot explain either of these Things, yet our Belief of them is not without Ideas. We have rational Evidence, that these Things are, and for that Reason we assent to them as undoubted Truths. What we believe is, that they really are; not the Mode of them, or how they be; neither is this

required: And, therefore, to say, that since it is the Mode of these Things, which constitutes them Mysteries, and we not believing any Thing with Relation to their Mode; a Persuasion that those Things are, is not a Belief of Mysteries, is downright Fallacy and not Reasoning. We contend that mysterious Things are, and that they must be believed to be true; but not that the Mode of those Things, is either known or believed; for that implies a Contradiction, *viz*. that these Things are incomprehensible, and yet are comprehended. We require an Assent only to the Truth of these Things being, and not to the Manner how they be.

All these Particulars are Branches of natural Religion. Unless we assent to the Truth of them, we can have no Religion at all. This I think must be evident to every intelligent Person. Duration without Beginning, is a fundamental Principle of the Religion of Nature. For if such a Duration is not allow'd, it undeniably follows, that once there was no God; because Duration must be granted, if any Being is thought to exist; immeasurable and unlimited, if that Being is infinite; limited and finite, if that Being is circumscribed and finite. That God is an eternal and necessary Being, is also a fundamental Principle of the Religion of Nature. For, should it be thought that once God was not, we can have no Demonstration of the Existence of Deity: Nay, upon that Supposition, it is demonstrable that there is no God. If he eternally is, he necessarily must be, and exists not by Virtue of the Will of any other Being, nor by Virtue of his own Will; because to

will, is an Act of some Being that now is; for a *Nonens,* or what is not, cannot will at all; and by Consequence, cannot will to be. Again, that all Matter once was not, is a Principle of natural Religion; for if it eternally was, it necessarily was; this is most evident. That which is eternal, ever existed; and whatever always existed, was brought into Being by *none,* nor could give Being to itself. And, that which is independent with Relation to its Being, must be so in the Mode of its Being. And, therefore, if Matter eternally was, it could not be subject to any Change. Besides, the Creation of the World, in a Duration which has Beginning, and commencing in a Duration, which had none, is another fundamental Principle of natural Religion. That a Duration must have been, which had no Commencement, is most demonstrable, and if the World, is not eternal, then in some Point, of that immeasurable Duration, it must have begun to be. Which Thing, tho' we most certainly know it is true, we cannot explain, it is infinitely above us. These Principles which Reason plainly dictates to us, are far beyond the Reach of our limited Faculties. We infallibly know they are; but we cannot conceive how they be. Hence, it is as clear as any Truth can possibly be, that we must either admit Things into our Belief, which exceed our Understanding, or we must become Atheists, and deny all Religion. And not only so; but we cannot avoid, if we will exclude Mysteries from our Faith, running into the most manifest Absurdities: Such as these, that once there was no Duration, nor any Being, infinite or finite: That the World role into Being without any Cause, or

that *that* which once was not, produced itself; and, consequently, that there is no first Cause or Almighty God, to whom Men are accountable for their Actions. It will be impossible for any Man to refuse Credit to these most monstrous Absurdities, if all Mysteries are excluded from human Assent and Faith.

From hence it appears, that this Assertion of Mr. *Foster's,* as it may be understood, can never be defended, upon the Principles of natural Religion; *viz. As we cannot in Reason, we are not obliged by Revelation, to carry our Faith one Jot beyond our Understanding.* *

* *Vol. 1, of Sermons, p. 170.*

Some may take this to be the Sense of this Assertion, that we are not obliged to believe any Thing that we cannot comprehend; and it is capable of such a Construction, tho' I do not understand this to be his Meaning; for there is a Fallacy in it, which I shall acquaint the Reader with hereafter, whereby, he will discern, that Mr. *Foster's* Reasoning, if I must call it so, concludes nothing at all to his Purpose. If the Truths above-mentioned, are Branches of natural Religion, and if they are incomprehensible, we are, as Men, indispensably obliged to assent to Things as true, which far exceed our Understanding. We plainly perceive that they are true, and as evidently discern, that they are inexplicable or mysterious. This Gentleman allows, that the

Manner of God's creating the World, that the Manner of God's Omnipresence; that the Manner of the general Resurrection, and the like, cannot be accounted for, and observes, that, it is no *Part of our Religion, to account for the Manner of either of these Things*, *

* *Page 171.*

The Truth of which Observation, I am persuaded, no Mortal will ever dispute. It is God's creating all Things out of nothing, by the Exertion of his Almighty Power, that is believed; and not the Manner of it. And, therefore, I should think, that Mr. *Foster* must be compelled to grant, that there are some Things to be believed true, which we are unable to account for the Manner of. This is all we contend for, as he himself, proceeds to mention. *For, I would ask,* says he, *does the most warm and forward Enthusiast pretend to believe more than that these Things are true? Does he believe any Thing at all with Respect. to the Manner of them? Nay, is not his urging that it is mysterious and incomprehensible, a Demonstration, that he, himself, knows he can believe nothing* particularly *about it*. *

* *Page 171.*

Mr. *Foster* and the Enthusiast it seems are exactly of the same Opinion in this Matter, *viz.* That these Things are incomprehensible; nevertheless, I suppose, he believes them

to be true, as well as the Enthusiast, and therefore, certainly, he can't esteem it Enthusiasm, to assent to the Truth of such Things being, the Mode of whose Being, neither he, nor any other Man is able to understand. Why then, does he call another an Enthusiast, and a warm forward Enthusiast, for believing Things incomprehensible, which are a Part of his own Creed?

And at the Time acquit him of the Absurdity of pretending to explain Truths, which are allow'd to be inexplicable. The Enthusiast, as Mr. *Foster* is pleased to call him, acts no other Part, than what is rational: For there is the clearest Reason to believe, that these Things are, and therefore, the Belief of them is built upon a sure and solid Foundation. And since he pretends not to do, what is impossible to be done, for what Cause, does he give him the odious Character of an Enthusiast? If the Belief of the Truth of these Things is Enthusiasm, Mr. *Foster* must be an Enthusiast, for he certainly believes, that God made the World out of nothing. That he exists every where, that all the dead shall be raised and the like. But, I am persuaded, that he will never act so irrationally, as pretend to account for the Manner of either of them, any more, than the warm and forward Enthusiast will attempt it. I beg leave to observe several Things here, that are of considerable Importance, and which are naturally deducible from what has been now said.

1. We Enthusiasts, as Mr. *Foster* calls us, plead for nothing more, than that the mysterious and incomprehensible Nature of a Thing is no just Objection to its Truth. That we have the clearest Reason to conclude, that natural Religion, in great Part, consists of such Things. That those Things ought to be firmly believed. Because we know, that none but down-right Atheists, who have no religious Principles at all, can refuse an Assent to them, and that they must unavoidably fall into Absurdities of the grossest Kind by a Denial of them.

2. If a Man believes a Thing to be, when he hath clear Evidence, that it certainly is, altho' the *Mode* of its Being, is to him unknown; so long as he does not pretend to *explain* its *Mode,* he acts a wise and rational Part; because his Assent to the Truth of that inexplicable Thing, is gain'd by a full and proper Evidence, that *that* Thing is.

3. In that Case it can't be said, that this Man believes without Ideas: For, his Belief of the Being of that Thing, is founded upon, or results from his Ideas that *that* Thing undoubtedly is: And those Ideas of its Being are raised in his Mind, by clear and evident Proofs, that it really is. Herein, we know what we believe; *viz*. that such a Thing is, tho' we understand not how it is. Thus, we believe, that the Loadstone and Iron mutually attract, upon undeniable Evidence, that they so do; but we cannot explain the Nature of that Attraction.

4. It follows hence, that a Mystery is something, which we cannot thoroughly understand or account for. It is not, a

Thing's barely being unknown, that makes at a Mystery. Things in themselves plain and easy to be understood, when they are told us, may be unknown, as the Cause of the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon. But it is easy to conceive, that the Interposition of the Moon between the Sun and the Earth, prevents its Rays shining upon us; and that the Interposition of the Earth between those Bodies, hinders the Moon's Reception of Light from the Sun. The Cause of the Solar, and Lunar Eclipses, was once unknown; but properly speaking, it was not then a Mystery. A proper Mystery is some Truth, whose Nature will not admit of Explication. Until discovered, it was a Secret; but upon the Discovery of it, that Cause is clearly and fully apprehended; which can never be said of any Thing, whose Nature is mysterious, and incomprehensible.

5. It is a Mistake, that a Thing ceases to be Mystery, when it is *shown*, *revealed,* and *known* to be. For, as Things, in themselves, plain and easy to be understood, may be unknown: So Things, that are as to their Nature inexplicable, may be *shown, revealed,* and *known* to be. The Revelation of a Thing which is mysterious, acquaints us with its Being; but for Want of Capacity to conceive of it, as it is in itself, the Manner of it, how clearly soever we perceive that it is, is still to us unknown. The Difference is very great between knowing that a Thing is, and understanding how it is. This, I am sure, is capable of the clearest Demonstration, from natural Principles, or independent of divine Revelation. For

Instance, we most certainly know, by just Reasoning, that nothing can have had eternal Existence but God; and that therefore the World, was created out of nothing; but tho' there is not any Truth, that we have a more clear Perception of, yet at is far from ceasing to be a Mystery, upon that evident Sense, which, by a proper Train of Reasoning, we obtain of its Certainty. It is, indeed, a Truth, that some Philosophers, through Blindness and Stupidity, have not discovered; but the clear Discovery we make of it, by just and easy Reasoning, changes not its Nature, 'tis still a Mystery. A Mystery it is that was unknown to many, to us it as a Mystery that is most clearly perceived, and by us most firmly believed, tho' we are absolutely unable to explain it.

6. It is mere Fallacy, and not Reasoning, to say, that since the Manner of Things inexplicable, is not known or believed, nor required so to be, that there are, properly speaking, no Mysteries in Religion; that we are not obliged to carry our Faith one Jot beyond our Understanding; and that it is no Part of our religious Obligations, to account for the Manner of Things, which we don't understand. We are not such Fools, as to imagine, that Men are bound to explain Things, whose Nature is inexplicable. And, we have, at least, Sense enough to know, that Gentlemen, who pretend, that Mysteries are not believed, *i.e.* that incomprehensible Things are not assented to, because their Nature, which is latent and hid from us, is not explained and believed, say nothing to the Purpose. They advance an absurd Sense, which no Man

believes, and then demolish it: And triumph, as if they had really gain'd a Conquest, whereas, in Fact, they have no Opposers, but in their own *wild* Imagination.

This is the fallacious Part, that Mr. *Foster* acts. If we do not contend, that Things above our Comprehension, are to be explained, or that the Manner of those Things is to be declared and believed, then all he says, is a mere Waste of Words. He only imposes upon his Reader, in endeavoring to make him believe, that he is manfully combating with some silly Adversary or other; and is at great Pains to demolish an Absurdity, which, I am of Opinion, he cannot prove, hath been advanced by a single Man. It was not, I think, possible for him, to speak more impertinently on the Subject of Mysteries, than he has done. What we plead for, as Men, is, that our Reason leads us to conclude, that there are some evident Truths, which exceed our Comprehension, that we are obliged to believe those Truths, and that our Belief of them is rational, because we have clear and undeniable Evidence, of those Things being true, *viz*. That there hath been a Duration, which had no Beginning. That God is an eternal and necessary Being. That once nothing but God did exist, and that therefore, all Things were made out of nothing. That all Things were created in a measurable Duration, taken out of, or commencing, in an eternal immeasurable Duration. I suppose the Truth of none of these Things, this Gentleman will call into Question. And if not, then he believes Things which exceed his Understanding: Or,

he assents to some Things as true, which he must be obliged to allow are inexplicable and mysterious. Hence it appears undeniably, that Things may be *discovered,* or *shown*, *revealed* and *known* to be, the *Manner* of which is still unknown, and therefore we denominate them Mysteries. Since, Mr. *Foster* takes no Notice, in what Sense, we use the Word Mystery, but vehemently opposes and severely condemns requiring Faith without Ideas, as if that was the Matter we intend; whereas we design no such Thing; he fights without an Adversary, and exposes an absurd Principle, which he has framed to himself, a Principle, which he never found, I am persuaded, advanced by the weakest Person he would be thought to oppose. The Ideas we form of a Thing, either respect its Being *merely,* or its Mode *together* with its Being. The latter, is true only, of such Things, whose Nature we are able to explain, and therefore they are not Mysteries, nor do any account them so. The former, relate to such Things, which, tho' we know they are, we cannot conceive how they be, and therefore we call them Mysteries. For Instance, we believe that God created all Things out of nothing: We know what we believe in this Matter, *viz*. that whatever is created, once had no Being at all. Our Idea is clear of the Non-existence of all Things once, as well as the Idea of the Being of Things we see exit; but of the Manner of the Production of all Things out of nothing, we have no Idea, nor can we have any such Idea, for it is not possible to a finite Mind. Hence it is certain, that we know what we believe, *viz*. that it is a Truth, that all finite Beings once were

not, and that they role into Existence, merely by Virtue of the Will of God, that they should be. But, as it is only the Truth of this that is believed, and not the Manner of their Production, it most clearly follows, that tho' we have Ideas, so far as our Faith is carried in this Point, yet it can't be said, that we comprehend this self-evident Truth, for we plainly perceive, that it contains more than we are able to understand.

If therefore, Mr. *Foster's* Meaning, is, when he says, *that we are not obliged to carry our Faith one Jot beyond our Understanding,* that we are not bound to believe the Manner of a Thing, the Mode of which we cannot understand, he disputes, I think, with no Body; if he apprehends he does, let him tell us, what silly Creature has advanced this absurd Principle, that Men are obliged to believe, that no such a Thing is, the Manner of which it is impossible to know. If this is not his Meaning, all he says is a mere Flourish of Words, he beats the Air, and fights with a Phantom, which, perhaps, no Man, but himself, ever dreamt of.

This I take to be his true Meaning, tho' it is fallacious, and most evidently impertinent: For, this can be no Objection to any Truth of natural or revealed Religion, or to the Belief of any mysterious and incomprehensible Doctrine, which Reason, or Revelation, afford us sufficient Evidence that it is true. If he intends, that we are not obliged to believe the Truth of Things, which we cannot account for, or conceive

the Manner of, he must necessarily conclude, that we are not obliged to believe a Duration without Beginning, or that God is an eternal and necessary Being, or that the World was made out of nothing, or that it was formed in a measurable Duration, which commenced in an eternal and immeasurable one. These are Principles we are bound to believe, as Men, tho' we cannot comprehend them. If therefore, he designs not to be an Advocate for the most absurd and atheistical Notions, nothing he offers, affects the Sentiments of the Enthusiast, he would be understood to oppose. The Enthusiast does not need Mr. *Foster's* Information to acquaint him, that in believing mysterious Truths, his Faith exceeds not his Understanding, he knows it perfectly as well, as that Gentleman may pretend to know it. He understands, that those incomprehensible Things are true, as guided by Reason, or Revelation, or by both; and the Truth of these Things is all he believes. It is therefore granted, that his Faith is not stretched beyond his Understanding; because it is the Truth of those Things he understands, and it is their Truth only that he believes, not the Manner of them. This is all, I think, that Mr. *Foster* can possibly mean, for surely, he will never say, nay, I know he will never say, that no Truth is the Object of human Faith, the Nature of which Men cannot understand. He must therefore allow, that Mysteries are believed, how much soever it may be against his Inclination to grant it. It is one Thing to perceive that such a Thing is true, and another to understand the Nature of it. When we apprehend both the Truth of a Thing, and its Nature, it can't

be called a Mystery: But when we discern the Truth of any Thing, and are yet unable to understand the Nature of that Thing, we call it, what it really is, *viz*. a Mystery. The Truth of that Thing, we believe, but not the Nature of it.

By this Time, I hope, the Reader clearly perceives the Fallacy of this Assertion: *As we cannot in Reason, we are not obliged by Revelation to carry our Faith one jot beyond our Understanding*. The Sense is this, we are not obliged to believe, that SO such a Thing is, the Mode of which we cannot understand; which is certainly true; but the Conclusion to be inferred from it, is as apparently false; *viz*. that we are not obliged to believe any Truth that is incomprehensible. And if we do believe an incomprehensible Truth, *i.e*. a Mystery; it is not believed, as it is a Mystery, but as it is a Truth; because it is understood, as it is a Truth, but not as it is a Mystery, A wonderful Discovery! It is what we perfectly knew, before we were told it by Mr. *Foster*. Reasoning, when I am able to discern it, always brings its Charms; and as it readily gains my Assent, it never fails to give me Pleasure; but a fallacious Way of arguing, I cannot but despite; because it is only calculated to deceive, and serve the Interest of Error, to the Suppression of amiable Truth.

As to what the Author says, about our being *puzzled and confounded by Mysteries* *

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it is a gross Mistake. No Man is puzzled and confounded when he hath clear Ideas: Clear Ideas we have of the Truth of the mysterious Things before expressed. We can with as much Ease conceive, that all created Things, once did not exit, and arrive at a Certainty, that they once were not; as we can perceive, that there is a vast Variety of dependent Beings. Some Philosophers dreaming that the World is eternal, or that it always was, is no Objection to this. It is a Proof of their egregious Folly and Stupidity, who *professing themselves to be wise, became Fools* {Romans. 1:22}.

If there is any one Principle self-evident, this is so; that whatever always was, necessarily was, and must be independent, both with Relation to its Being, and the Mode of its Being, and, consequently, it cannot but eternally remain, what it ever hath been, and now is. Men, therefore, are not puzzled with the clear Truth of the Production of all Things out of nothing, which by just and easy Reasoning, they plainly discover must be true. If, indeed, they will set themselves to enquire HOW the World was made out of nothing, they will unavoidably be puzzled and confounded, and their Reason will be non-plussed. But this is not their Business; what is reasonably expected of them to believe is, that the numerous Creatures they see are, once were not; and that they were brought into Being by the Almighty Power of God, tho' they cannot conceive *how*. And the same might be

observed of other mysterious Truths. Clear Ideas we have, of the Being and Truth of the Things, tho' not of the Nature and Mode of those Things. And therefore, Mr. *Foster's* dogmatically saying, *they are really nothing at all to us,* concludes just nothing. This Point he finishes with an insulting Air, he asks, if there is *any Advantage merely in being in the dark, and having no Ideas?* In the dark we are not as to the Truth of mysterious Things, tho' we cannot explain the Mode of those Things. Ideas we have of the Being and Truth of such Things, tho' we have not of the Manner of them.

Farther, the Gentleman asserts, that Things which are *shown, revealed, and known, cease to be Mysteries*. *

** Page 167, 168.*

This Assertion, I can't but think, must most plainly appear false to every considerate Person. We know that a Duration without Beginning must have been; but it don't cease to be a Mystery, upon the clearest Perception we have of its Certainty. We as clearly apprehend this fundamental Truth of natural Religion, to be infinitely beyond the Reach of our Understanding, as we can discover that such a Duration hath most certainly been: And, therefore, it ceases not to be a Mystery upon the evident Knowledge we acquire of its Truth. If Mr. *Foster* had said, that when a Thing is revealed, and the Revelation of its Being is understood, it is no longer

unknown or hid; every Man would have assented to the Truth of it. But that is not the Matter under Consideration. Who will say that a Thing is concealed, when it is clearly revealed and known to be a Truth upon that clear Revelation of it? Not the Enthusiast Mr. *Foster* opposes. The Question is plainly this, whether there are not some Things, which we know are true, the Manner of which we cannot understand? If this is allow'd, all we contend for is granted. Many such Things there are, at least, in natural Religion, if there are none such in revealed. And if Reason dictates to us some Truths which exceed our Comprehension, or the Manner of which we know nothing at all of, and yet we act wisely in believing those Truths; is it unreasonable to suppose, that there may be other Truths, of an incomprehensible Nature, that Reason could never discover? Surely no Man can imagine this. And if the incomprehensible Nature of those Truths, which Reason is capable of discovering, is no just Objection to them, why should the mysterious Nature of some other Truths revealed by God to Men, be thought a solid Objection to them, and be esteem'd sufficient to justify us in a Denial of those Truths?

Mr. *Foster* hath another extraordinary Assertion, which it will be proper in a particular Manner, to consider and examine; it is this: *Where the Mystery begins Religion ends*. *

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1. Let me ask this Gentleman, if there is any Thing *mysterious* in *religious* Principles? In the Omnipresence of God for Instance, which he mentions? He is obliged to grant there is; or that the Manner of God's existing every where, cannot be accounted for. This is allowing the utmost we desire, *viz*. that some Truths which we ought to believe, we cannot comprehend, or account for the Manner of; and therefore, I should think, that the Dispute between Mr. *Foster* and us Enthusiasts, might immediately cease; for as we profess, that the Mode of God's Omnipresence, and the Manner of other mysterious Things, are to us inexplicable, we do not pretend, that it is any Part of our religious Obligations to account for them. We are not such Fools to be guilty of Contradictions, that are so very evident.

2. I beg leave to observe, that a Mystery can never begin, where nothing of mysterious Nature is. And since he plainly allows, that there is a Mystery in this Matter, which is a Point of Faith, he grants us all we can desire, and it evidently appears, that he has been saying just nothing all this Time, and that in Reality he has no Opponent. It seems after the whole of this labour'd Dispute against Mysteries in Religion, that we are bound to believe Things, the Manner of which, we cannot account for; only it is no Part of our Religion, to account for the Manner of those Things. When Mr. *Foster* shall produce any Person, who hath said it is, I will readily allow, that he hath an Adversary; but I should think him so

ridiculous and weak, as to be justly beneath the Notice of any Man.

3. Although it is no Part of our Religion to account for the Manner of God's Omnipresence, yet it is no inconsiderable Branch thereof, to adore this incomprehensible Truth, or to reverence and fear him, who is every where present. All Adoration and true Reverence of God, arises from an Apprehension and Belief of his incomprehensible Perfections.

Religion, therefore, is so far from *ending,* where the Mystery, in Truths relating to God, begins; that there it commences. That Man who believes nothing farther concerning God, than he can comprehend, I am confident, will never see cause to adore and fear him. Hence it is evident, that this jingling Sentence is so false, that nothing can be expressed which is more untrue. Thus far, I think, we may proceed upon the Principles of natural Religion. If we attend to Revelation, we shall find, that it contain Truths, which are stilled Mysteries. *We speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom {*1Corinthians. 2:7}. *Without Controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness*. {1Timothy. 3:16}. *Even the Mystery, which hath been hid from Ages and Generations past {*Colossians. 1:26}. *And to make all Men see, what is the Fellowship of the Mystery {*Ephesians. 3:9}. Now, either the Gospel is called a Mystery, *merely,* because it was once unknown, or because it consists of Doctrines, that are of a

wonderful and *mysterious* Nature. In the former Sense only, Mr. *Foster* understands it. In his Opinion, it contains nothing, but what may easily be comprehended. Its Truths do not at all exceed the Capacities of Men.

There are no Heights in the Gospel, to which the human Mind cannot raise its Ideas: Nor any Depths in the *deep* Things of God, which the human Understanding cannot fathom. All the Doctrines of Christianity, being once revealed, are upon a Level with our reasoning Powers. In natural Religion, we have many Truths, which are above the Comprehension of Men, but the Gospel only consists of Doctrines, whose Nature, may be taken in, in its *full* Latitude and Extent. Our Ideas of its Principles, may not only be clear, but adequate also; for there is not any Thing, that exceeds the Reach of our narrow Minds.

This is the Doctrine, which this Gentleman teaches us; which is a Point, that ought to be very clearly proved, because it naturally leads us to reject any Doctrine, which exceeds our Comprehension. If this Principle is not fully proved, we cannot be justified in a Disbelief of other Principles, upon this Foundation. If this is found a *Prejudice* only, which has taken Possession of the Minds of Men, how will they be able to defend or excuse themselves, in the Denial of Truths, of *important* Truths, under the Influence of this *Prejudice?* If God has communicated to Man, the Knowledge of Things, which are above his Comprehension, in a natural Way; is it

irrational to think, that the Knowledge of other mysterious Things, concerning himself, his Designs, and his Operations, may be conveyed to Men, in a supernatural Manner, or by a Revelation superadded to the Light of Nature? If we find ourselves obliged to believe Things, that are above the *utmost Stretch* of our Thoughts *as Men*; is it absurd to conceive, that as Christians, we are under such an Obligation: And that an Addition is made to the Number of such mysterious Things, we are required to believe, by a farther Revelation we have received from Heaven? If natural Religion did not contain Truths which the Mind of Man cannot thoroughly understand, it might be argued with some Shew of Probability, that the Christian Religion recommends no mysterious Principles to our serious Regard: But since it evidently appears, that a Man must become an Atheist, if he will not believe more than he can comprehend, what Wonder is it, if the Christian finds the Number of Truths to increase upon him, which he cannot form adequate Ideas of, by that Revelation Providence puts into his Hand? And as in believing the incomprehensible Truths of natural Religion, it cannot be said, either, that we renounce our Reason, or believe without Ideas; because our reasoning Powers are exercised in the Discovery of those Truths, and we form Ideas of the Truth of those mysterious Things, tho' not of the Mode of those Things: So it is not true, that in believing the Mysteries of revealed Religion, we either renounce our Reason, or believe without Ideas, for we employ our Reason upon Revelation, in the Discovery of its Truths, and we have

Ideas of the Truth of its mysterious Doctrines, tho' not of those revealed incomprehensible Things. It is therefore, a very weak and absurd Observation, which one Person makes, *viz.* this, *it appeared to me a very odd Method to make a Man, a Christian, by requiring him to renounce that Faculty, which alone made him a Man.* *

* *Mr. CRUTTENDEN'S Experience.*

But the Observation is not more absurd than it is groundless, for none require Men to renounce their Reason, in order to become Christians, that I know of, tho' it is certain they must believe, as Christians, more than they can comprehend, and so they must as Men, if they will not be Athens, and deny all religious Principles, which if they do, I am sure, they must really renounce their Reason, and will deserve to be numbered among the Brutes, for so doing.

Gentlemen, who allow not of Mysteries in Religion, are very free in charging others with Prepossessions and Prejudices, in forming their religious Sentiments. 'Tis therefore, highly reasonable to expect, that they should take up no Principle for granted, without evident Proof of its Truth, and especially a Principle of so much Consequence as this is, whereby other Doctrines are to be tried, and if they are not found to agree with this, a bold Demand is immediately made upon us, to give them up. If we enquire how this Principle may be prov'd to be true, which is made a Criterion of revealed

Truth; we shall plainly find considerable Difficulty will attend it. Reason can never prove it; because that most evidently leads us to embrace Doctrines, which far surpass our Comprehension. And, therefore, it cannot be irrational to believe Truths, of which we have not, nor can possibly have adequate Ideas.

By the Light of Nature, we most clearly discern that many Things are true, the Mode of which, we know nothing at all of. The Proof of this Principle therefore, must be fetched from Revelation, if it ever receives any. I ask, where do the Scriptures acquaint us, that they contain no Doctrines above our Comprehension, or that Faith is not required of us, except we thoroughly understand the Nature of the Truths to which they demand our Assent? I am not able to find any Thing like this in the Word of God. On the contrary, I find the inspired Writers speak of *wondrous* Things in God's Law: And of the Things of God, as deep: And of the *Depth* of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, and of his Judgments, as *unsearchable,* and of his Ways, *as past finding out*: And of the Gospel, tho' it is clearly revealed, as being still a *Mystery*: *Great is* (not *was*) the *Mystery* of Godliness, *etc*. And concerning it, as the Wisdom of God in a *Mystery*. This Sort of Language seems to me to suggest, that there is a *Sublimity* and *Depth* in the Gospel, which Men cannot *reach* or *fathom*. And, therefore, until I shall see it fully proved, that those lofty Modes of Speech, express nothing above the Limits of the human Mind; I cannot but

esteem this Principle a mere Prejudice, which is most plainly contradicted by Revelation, as well as Reason.

***Secondly*:** I observe that divine Revelation contains Mysteries, or Doctrines which are w*onderful* and *mysterious*. Mr. *Foster* owns that the Scriptures acquaint us with some Truths, that Reason could not discover. *

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But he will not allow, that those Truths, are now *Mysteries, i.e.* that they are concealed; pray, Sir, who will say they are hidden Secrets, when they are clearly revealed? Not the Enthusiast you oppose. If you say any Thing to the Purpose, you must assert, that those Things which are stilled *Mysteries* in the Scriptures, may be perfectly understood and accounted for by Men. You are pleased to take Notice of two Things, which the Apostle *Paul* calls *Mysteries*: The first is, as you express it, *preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles,* *

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and refer to {Romans. 16:25}, *according to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret, since the World began*. This is very inaccurately observed of you; for it is not the Revelation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, that is there intended by the *Mystery*; but the Gospel itself, which is so very evident, that it is strange you did not discern it. But if

you think, that the Rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, contain nothing beyond the Reach of the human Understanding, you are certainly of a different Opinion from the Apostle, who upon the Consideration thereof, expresses his Astonishment, as having in View, a *boundless,* a *bottomless* Ocean: *O! the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out?*

The Second Mystery you mention, is the Change which will pass upon the living Saints at the coming of Christ. This you speak of, as a plain Truth in itself, and adapted to *all Understandings*. If you intend, that it is a Truth plainly revealed, you are right; but if you mean, that it may be perfectly understood, or that the Manner of that Change may be accounted for, you are most grossly mistaken. If you are able, be so kind, as oblige me, with a clear Explication of the Nature and Mode of that Change; which, when you have done, I will undertake any Task, you shall please to impose upon me; even, if you require it, to tell you how the World was made out of nothing. I say, that this is a plain Truth, and that it is a Mystery. A plain Truth, because it is plainly revealed. A Mystery, because the Nature and Mode of it cannot be explain'd. Other mysterious and inexplicable *Doctrines,* the evangelical Revelation acquaints us with.

1. *The Doctrine of the Trinity, or the real Distinction which there is between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and their*

essential Unity. This Doctrine, I allow, is an Absurdity, if it is not a Mystery. It is frequently represented as an Absurdity. At present, not to say it is a Truth, if it is an Error, it will not soon be proved absurd. We apprehend, that the Distinction between these Three is real; that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but distinct from them both; and that they are essentially one. All the Difficulty lies, in conceiving of their real Distinction, consistent with their Oneness of Essence. This, say some, is absurd, or repugnant to Reason; for there cannot be three, who have Understanding, and Will and Power to act in one Being. When we enquire, how this appears absurd, the Answer given is, an intelligent Agent is an understanding Being, and therefore to say, that three intelligent Agents are one Being, is a Contradiction. This is granted with relation to *finite* rational Agents; but that is no Proof, that so it is in the *infinite* Being of God. We know, that a finite distinct, intelligent Agent, is a distinct Being; but no Man is able to prove, that there can be but one in the infinite Being of God, who hath Understanding, and Will, and Power to act, how confidently soever some are pleased to assert it. The Conclusion is drawn from the Knowledge Men have of a finite created Being, and not from their Knowledge of the Being of God. The Argument in Fact, proceeds thus; this cannot be in finite created Beings, and therefore it is not possible in the infinite increated Being of God. We are sensible that the reasoning is just, and the Conclusion certain, with respect to finite intelligent Agents; but provided

this is a Mistake, it can never be proved an Absurdity, without such an Acquaintance with the Nature of the divine Being, as no Man can, with any Degree of Modesty pretend to have. It is not possible for any to invent an Absurdity, but it may be discover'd to be an Absurdity; even with relation to this mysterious Doctrine of the Trinity.

The Reader may please to observe to this Purpose, two Things expressed by *Wolzogenius,* a Socinian Writer, relating to this Doctrine, which are evidently absurd. 1. *What if any should, imagine with himself, and say, that in God is one Person only and three Essences, how will he be refuted*. *

* *Quod si quis sibi aliter Rem imaginetur, & dicat, in Deo esse unam tantum Personam, & tres Essentias? Quomodo ille refutabitur?*

I answer thus: Either these three Essences, are intelligent and voluntary Agents, or they are not. If they are, then they must be three Persons; for we understand by a Person, a free intelligent Agent; and therefore to say, that there are three such in God, and but one such, is to affirm a manifest Contradiction: If they are not intelligent and voluntary Agents, then they cannot be one Person; or one free and understanding Agent. 2. *Or if he should say, that in God are three Persons, yet these taken together are one Person only, how can he be refuted?* *

** Vel si dicat, etsi in Deo sint tres Personae, illas tamen, simul sumtas esse tantum unam Personam? Instructio ad utilem Lectionem Librorum. Nov. Test. cap. 6.*

The Answer is most easily: For he that shall affirm, that there are three intelligent Agents in God, and but one intelligent Agent in the Deity, will assert a most *palpable* Contradiction. God cannot be three in the same Sense, wherein he is one; and he cannot be one in the same Sense in which he is three. These are direct Absurdities, which this learned Man supposes some one to assert, in order to expose the sacred Doctrine of the Trinity to Contempt; but they fail of answering his End; and are a Proof, that any absurd Imaginations relating to that Doctrine, may be soon discerned, and be easily distinguished from the mysterious and incomprehensible Nature of it.

It is not difficult for Men to invent Absurdities; but it is impossible for any Man to devise a Mystery. And, therefore, since the Doctrine of the Trinity, cannot be proved to be an Absurdity, it ought to be allowed, that it is a Mystery, or an incomprehensible Truth, which the Understanding of Man could never have devised.

2. *The Incarnation of Christ, or his Assumption of the human Nature into Union with himself,* is an evangelical Mystery. *Great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the Flesh* {1Timothy. 3:16}. *The Word was made Flesh, and*

dwelt among us {John. 1:14}. The Son of God by this Act became what he was not before; still remaining what he was. And the Acts and Sufferings of the human Nature, in Obedience to the Will of the Father, in order to the Salvation of Sinners, are to be consider'd, as the Acts and Sufferings of his divine Person, not subjectively, but relatively; as the human Nature is become one with himself. Hence, his Righteousness is called the *Righteousness of God*: And his Blood, *the Blood of God*. 'Tis from this results the infinite Merit of his Obedience and Death.

3. *The Doctrine of Propitiation by the Death of Christ is a Mystery. Neither the Wisdom of Men, nor the Wisdom of Angels, could have fixed on this Method of expiating Guilt, of satisfying the Law, and Justice of God*. Nor can any finite Mind comprehend the Riches of God's Grace, which are displayed in this admirable Scheme, or form adequate Ideas of the Wisdom of this surprizing Contrivance, nor fully conceive of the amazing Shine of the Glory of divine Holiness, Purity and Justice, which there is in this astonishing Transaction. This is the *Wisdom of God in a Mystery, his hidden Wisdom, which be ordained before the World to our Glory* {1Corinthians. 2:7}.

4. *The Justification of Sinners, by the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, is a Mystery*. How Man, that is a guilty Creature, could be just with God, no created Understanding was able to determine. Infinite Wisdom alone,

could provide for the Acceptance of Criminals with God, in Consistence with the Honor and Authority of the Law, and the Support of the Rights of divine Justice. And the Riches of Grace that are discovered, in our being made righteous, by the Obedience of Christ, are beyond Expression, yea even Conception.

5. *Regeneration is a Mystery*. The Truth of the Thing we know; but the Manner of it, we are no more able to describe, than we can particularly tell how Wind is produced, and what becomes of it, when it subsides. *The Wind bloweth, where it listeth*; *and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell from whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*: *So is every one that is born of the Spirit* {John. 3:8}. In short, the Christian Religion is a Mystery; or all the Doctrines of Christianity are *mysterious*. They are Truths, which Reason could never have discovered, and they far exceed in Wisdom, Importance and Glory, the most enlarged Ideas of our narrow Minds. It is therefore false, that *the greatest Part of Christianity is only a Reinforcement of the Religion of Nature*, *

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which Mr. *Foster* asserts it is. For Reason, or the Light of Nature, could never have discovered any of its peculiar and most important Doctrines, to the Comfort and Happiness of apostate Creatures, in Subordination to the Glory of God, which I hope, undeniably to prove in the second Chapter.

CHAPTER TWO OF REASON

IT is my Design in this Chapter to show, what Things Reason, or the Light of Nature, is capable of discovering. That it cannot be a Guide to our Happiness. That it is to judge of the Truth of Revelation. That it is to be exercised upon Revelation, in order to learn those Principles, which that recommends to our religious Regard.

First, *I am to show what Things Reason, or the Light of Nature, is capable of discovering*.

1. *It is able to discover with Certainty the Being of a God*. If we take a Survey of the visible Creation, and consider the Order, Beauty, and regular Operations of Nature, we shall find ourselves obliged to confess, that some wise and powerful Being exists, who form'd the Universe. 'Tis impossible that a rational Enquirer into the Works of Creation, who considers this Property of Matter, *viz*. that it is inert, or inclined to Rest, can fail of discovering, that Motion is given to the Earth, and other Planets, by some superior Being. And he that duly considers, the different Magnitudes, vast Distances, the mutual Attraction, and uniform regular Motions of the heavenly Bodies, must necessarily grant the Existence of God. It is contrary to all Reason to imagine, that

the World produced itself; and it is as plainly contradictory to all good Sense, to conceive, that a single Particle of Matter, could ever exist of itself: And, consequently, the Opinion of the Formation of the World, by a casual Hit of innumerable Atoms, of different Natures, Sizes and Forms, and endued with various kinds of Motion, must certainly be false. For, not to insist upon the Absurdity of imagining, that so many thousands of Bodies, of various Shapes, and of very different Properties and Motions, should be formed by an indirected and fortuitous moving of Atoms, in immense Space; it is repugnant to Reason to think, that the smallest Particle of Matter could ever rise into being of itself. How then shall we be able to account for the Existence of those infinite Atoms, of which some Philosophers have very absurdly thought, that the World was form'd, without granting the Existence of some powerful Being, by whom those Atoms were produced?

2. *That the Creator is in Wisdom and Power and Goodness infinite*. If Skill and Wisdom appear in his Works, and such Wisdom as raises our Admiration, he must, most certainly, in himself, be wise above our Comprehension. If there is an astonishing Display of Power in the Formation of all Things out of nothing, without all Scruple the Author of Nature is possessed of Power inconceivable. If there is, in Providence, an amazing Discovery and Exercise of Beneficence, towards the various Creatures, which we see exist, and particularly towards Man, in the suitable Provision which is made, not

only for the Support of his animal Life, but for his Entertainment, and the Delight of his various Senses, and the Pleasure of his Mind: Is it not truly rational to conceive, that God is in himself good, infinitely beyond our narrow Conceptions? He who will not allow, that there is exquisite Art, most conspicuous in the Creation, and that the Author of it, is not wise infinitely above his Understanding, must be a *Fool*. To say, that there is not an infinitely wise Being, who endued Man, the chief of the lower creation, with Wisdom and Sense, is to divest Mankind of all Reason, and rank them among the *Brutes*. If there is not a Being, who is the Fountain of Wisdom, there certainly is no such Thing, as Wisdom, Sense or Reason in the World. It must be *mere* Imagination, that Man is rational, or that he acts any Thing, in a wise and rational Manner. For as it is contrary to all Sense, to suppose that Man is an underived Being, so it is repugnant to Reason to conceive, that he is the Subject of the lowest Degree of underived Wisdom.

3. *The Light of Nature directs us to adore the Almighty Creator.* It being evident, that God as infinitely wise, and powerful, and good, it appears most agreeable to Reason, that he should be honored by the intelligent Part of his Creation, which he has rendered capable of discerning those his Perfections, as they illustriously shine in all his Works. If it is consonant to Reason to esteem a Man, who is only the Subject of Wisdom, which is infinitely below what resides in the Creator, it is doubtless fit and proper, that God, the

Fountain of Light, Wisdom and Glory should be adored, feared and obey'd.

4. Reason must, I think, convince us, that Mankind are not what they *ought to be,* neither in the Temper of their Minds, nor in their Conduct, and, consequently, that Man is not now what he *once* was. *viz*. when he was created of God. It would be an Instance of the greatest *Stupidity,* and a *pregnant* Proof, that we are abandoned to all *Sense* of Virtue, to entertain an Opinion, that the Bulk of Mankind, are as regular in their Behavior, as Creatures possessed of a Principle of Reason to govern them, *ought to be*. And a Person, who perceives not, that his Passions, are *disorderly, exorbitant,* and *tumultuous*. That his Mind is *unwary, inconstant,* and str*ongly disposed* to *vain* and *sinful* Pleasures, must be strangely unacquainted with himself. We, therefore, are not such, as our Reason plainly dictates to us, it is fitting and proper we should be: But we are degenerate in our Taste, and imperfect in our Conduct, which oust to be uniform, perfectly, and without the least Interruption virtuous. If Men in general are not, If no Man in particular is, what he *ought to be,* surely it is reasonable to conclude, that Man is not now such as God made him. An intelligent Creature he indeed is; but *corrupt* and *vicious,* which he was not in his primitive State, That, I think, is as evident to Reason, as it is clear by Experience, that we are in any Degree tainted with moral Evil. We must either maintain, that Man is now *in every Respect,* what it is fit and proper he should be; or grant, that he once was, what

he at present is not; unless we will be so irrational and impious against our Maker, as to affirm, that he form'd us with evil Inclinations, and unruly Passions.

5. *The Light of Nature clearly suggests, that moral Evil is contrary to God, and subjects his Creatures to his Displeasure*. It is rational to think, that perfect Virtue is the Object of the Approbation of the infinitely pure Mind, and therefore, it must be reasonable to conclude, that God would always treat it with Marks of Esteem, if it was to be found among Men. Hence a certain and self-evident Conclusion may be drawn, *viz*. that perfect Virtue would be rewarded by God, if human Nature really possessed it. And, consequently, were Men what they ought to be, they could never entertain a gloomy Thought of being miserable hereafter; but they must be persuaded of the Fruition of complete Happiness for ever. It is the Imperfection of their Virtue, and a Consciousness of Vice, which occasion their dread of penal Evil, or the Loss of eternal Good. In-defective Obedience would never be attended with the least Hesitation, concerning an Interest in the Favor of God, and an everlasting Enjoyment of consummate Bliss. But, as Men are imperfect in Virtue, and are tainted with the Evil of Sin, they cannot but be sensible, upon this Consideration, that they have forfeited a Claim to all divine Benefits, And that unless Imperfection and Vice, can be approved of God, they must unavoidably be the Objects of his Disapprobation, and, consequently, miserable. Reason, therefore, if duly attended to, will lead us into a

Sense of our Misery, and discover to us, in some Degree, our present deplorable Circumstances. Thus far it may conduct us; but here it leaves us; and cannot be a Guide to our Happiness.

By the Light of Nature, we discern, in some Measure, our Wound and Disorder; but ‘tis the Light of Revelation only, which acquaints us, with the Method of our Cure and Recovery. And yet, alas! in this momentous Affair, the imperfect Reason of Man, scorns to confers her Ignorance; she will usurp the Seat of Judgment, and dare to determine concerning Subjects, which are very far above her Sphere.

Secondly, I am to prove, that Reason cannot be a Guide to our Happiness These Considerations following, I think, amount to a full Demonstration and Proof of this Point.

1. If we consider Reason in its State of Perfection, it could not then, regularly form Conclusions, without sure and solid Principles to argue upon and infer from. This is so evident, that I suppose its a Truth no Man will dispute, and therefore no Pains are necessary to prove it.

2. The Light of Nature, in its perfect State, had no other Principle to argue upon, or from which it might infer a perpetual Enjoyment of Happiness, than an unblemished and constant Practice of Holiness, and, consequently, now Man is imperfect, he can have no solid Principle, within the

Discovery of his Reason, from which to argue, that he is able to attain Felicity, in this his corrupt and degenerate State. That Reason in her State of Perfection, could have no other Principle than the above-mentioned, from which a Conclusion might be inferred of lasting Felicity, is fell evident, if it is allowed that Man was subject to a perfect Law, in his primitive Condition, which surely no intelligent Person, can make the least Scruple of. Now if Reason, in its perfect State, had no other Principle to argue upon, with Relation to a perpetual Enjoyment of good, than that before expressed, it cannot possibly, in its depraved State, have any Principle at all, from which it may argue, with the least Degree of Probability, to a Recovery from deferred Ruin. The Voice of the Law, (which perfect Reason was in Subjection to) expresses nothing more than this: *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And, if thou doest not well*; *Sin lieth at the Door*; *i.e*. Guilt and Punishment: And nothing farther, can Reason discover.

3. *Much less is the Light of Nature capable of determining in what way, upon the Supposition of a divine Design to save Sinners, it will be most for the Honor of the Perfections of God, to deliver guilty Creatures from deserved Destruction*. It is certainly irrational to think, that Reason was ever capable of making Discoveries beyond the Compass of the Law, which was its only Rule of Judgment and Practice; if that Law therefore, gives no Hint concerning the Welfare and Happiness of Transgressors, how is it possible, that Reason

can, in its imperfect State, lay any Foundation, on which sinful Men may build Hopes of Safety, or point out to us, by what Methods they may be recovered from Ruin? The Law knows nothing of any such Purpose, nor of the Way wherein, such a gracious Decree might be accomplished, and, consequently, Reason must be absolutely ignorant of both. Is not Reason then, intolerably imperious, to place herself in the Judgment-Seat, and pretend to decide in this Cause, since she has no Principles to guide her, but what she says down to herself, and begs.

And yet, Men are so *abominably insolent,* as to grow *furious,* if their Decisions are called into Question, and corrected by an infinitely superior Judge, concerning Atonement for Sin, the Acceptance of sinful Men, with a God of infinite and unspotted Purity, concerning the Way of depraved Man's attaining Holiness and consummate, endless Bliss. The Law, under which Reason originally was placed, delivers nothing at all, respecting either of these Particulars, nevertheless, such is the detestable Pride and Arrogance of Men, that they will needs be Judges of them all, and if their undirected Imaginations, are not embraced for Truth, they will *rage,* and pour *Contempt* on those, who make a Difficulty of allowing them to be fit Judges, in Things which they know are entirely out of their Reach.

By these Particulars, I am naturally led to take Notice of some false Principles and Mistakes, which Mr. *Foster* advances, and delivers on this Subject.

1. He asserts, *That there is no Medium between employing our rational Faculties in examining and stating the Doctrines of Revelation, and being guided wholly by Sounds*. *

* *Vol. 4 of Sermons, Page 88.*

1. Reason should not presume to state, in what it cannot direct. It is absurd to think it may. 2. Either Revelation contains some Doctrines, which are beyond the Compass of Reason, or it does not. If it does, then Reason can give no Direction about the Nature of those Doctrines, of Course it is *ridiculous* to imagine, that Reason may state and determine concerning the Nature of those Doctrines. If Revelation delivers no Truths but such as the Light of Nature is capable of discovering, then, the Word of God is Law only; and hath nothing of Gospel in it. 3. The alone Business of Reason with Relation to evangelical Doctrines, is, to consider their Scriptural Evidence, Connection, Dependence., and Harmony. Reason is to judge of the Import of the Language of Scripture, wherein the important Doctrines of Atonement for Sin, Justification before God, and Regeneration are express'd; but should she presume to state and determine of the Nature of them, the might justly be censured, as *extravagantly rude and insolent*. Because these and all other

evangelical Doctrines, are Truths which *Eye hath not teen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man* {1Corinthians. 2:9}.

2. The Author adds, *That it is Reason alone, that can set in a clear and distinct View, the Excellencies, peculiar Beauties, and Uses of Revelation*. *

**Page 89*.

1. It is freely allowed, that Reason is capable of discerning the Excellencies and Beauties of the Language of holy Scripture. 2. Reason is able to understand what is the proper Import of the Terms and Expressions, used in the sacred Pages; and, consequently, it is capable of discovering what Truths are therein deliver'd. 3. But, Reason of itself, or without divine Illumination, cannot discern the Glory and Importance of evangelical Principles. If it may, then there is no need of *the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation* being given to Men, to help them to understand the Things of God. Then, Prayer to God for Illumination, that we may discern the Wonders of his Word, is vain and idle: Then spiritual Knowledge is not a Gift of divine Grace. 4. Yet, Revelation is not insignificant, nor as absolutely lost, with Respect to Mankind, as to Beings that are entirely irrational, which Mr. *Foster* asserts it is, if Reason cannot discern its peculiar Excellencies and Beauties. For, as Men, we understand the Sense of Revelation; and as Christians, we discover the

spiritual Nature and singular Importance of its Principles, which are purely evangelical Farther,

3. He observes, *that nothing can justly be admitted as a Principle of revealed Religion, which is repugnant to Reason*. *

* *Page 90*.

This is so evident a Truth, that I am persuaded, no Man will contradict it. 2. But Revelation contains Truths, which are above Reason, tho' not contrary to it. 3. When we say, that there are some Truths above Reason, we mean either, (1.) That they are above the Comprehension of Reason: or, (2.) That Reason cannot discover those Truths. In the first Sense, many Truths of natural Religion are above Reason; this, I think, is dearly proved in the foregoing Chapter. In the second, as well as in the first Sense, evangelical Principles are above Reason. It could not discover them, nor can it comprehend them. Mr. *Foster* makes a Supposition of what is false, on this Head, *viz. that the Use of Reason, in Matters of Religion is denied*. This is not true in Fact, and therefore, it is nothing better than *grave Impertinence* to reason upon it. Nor do we set Faith and Reason at Variance, and make them oppose and clash with each other, which Mr. *Foster* suggests we do. For in believing evangelical Mysteries we contradict no Dictate of Reason or Principle of natural Religion, and we employ our Reason upon Revelation, in order to obtain an

Apprehension of its Sense, and to discover the Connection and Dependence of its Truths.

4. The Gentleman says, *we can scarce, indeed, suppose, that there are any Truths of the first Rank, and of universal Moment, with Respect to the Happiness of Mankind, but what Reason, if duly cultivated, might have discovered.* *

* *Page 91, 92.*

1. To maintain that our Reason is capable of discovering every important Truth of natural Religion, in this State of Degeneracy and Imperfection, is a very liberal Grant, and is what will not admit of clear and full Proof. 2. If the Gospel is of Importance to the Happiness of Mankind, we are absolutely unable to discover many momentous Truths; for no evangelical Principle, being reducible to the Law, which is the sole Rule of Judgment to Reason; that must, of Course, be wholly ignorant of every Gospel-Doctrine; and therefore, this is most notoriously false. Reason could never resolve, whether God will pardon Sin, justify a Sinner, and render guilty Creatures perfectly holy and eternally happy: Nor in what Way Criminals might be saved, consistent with the Honour of the Law, and the Glory of the divine Perfections. 3. We are sensible, that the evangelical Revelation, is of little Weight with some Men, and that they discover no spiritual Excellency in the Doctrines of Atonement for Sin by the Death of Christ; of Justification by his Righteousness; of Sanctification by the gracious Influences of his Spirit: And

we know, that if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. These Truths are of the greatest Moment to the Happiness of sinful Men, and are as far above the Discovery of Reason, as they exceed in Sublimity the short Extent of our narrow Minds.

5. Mr. *Foster* asserts, *that Reason hath no Principles on which to proceed in forming a certain Conclusion, as to the Eternity of future Rewards*. *

* *Page 97.*

1. I ask, whether Reason has any solid and evident Principles, from which it may draw a certain Conclusion, that Man is an immortal Creature? If it has not, then, I think, that no Truth of natural Religion can be established by it; and Men may say, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and 'tis uncertain whether we shall exist after Death or not, why therefore should we concern ourselves about what is doubtful, and cannot possibly be made evident, by our utmost Force of reasoning? He who sees not, that this destroys the whole of natural Religion, must have lost his Reason. 2. Why is it that Man, who is a reasonable immortal Creature, is attended with any Scruple concerning the endless Enjoyment of Good? From whence must his Doubts of perpetual Happiness spring? Must they not arise from a Sense of the Imperfection of his Virtue, and a Consciousness of his Vices? Certainly they can't proceed from any other

Cause. 3. The Reason of Man, therefore, may discover to him, in some Measure, his Misery; it may convince him of his Obnoxiousness to future Punishment; but it can't furnish him with any Hope of future Rewards. 4. I can not reconcile this with what Mr. *Foster* has above observed, *viz*. that we can scarce, indeed, suppose, that there is any Truth of the first Rank, and which is of universal Moment, with Respect to the Happiness of Mankind, but what Reason, if duly cultivated, might have discovered. Surely, it is a Truth of the first Rank, that Man is an immortal Creature. And if he for ever exists, he must exist either in a State of Happiness, or Misery. I am sure, right Reason would lead him strongly to conclude upon his endless Felicity, if he was what he ought to be; because it is irrational to think, that God will render any innocent Creature eternally miserable. And, therefore, Men's fluctuating in their Thoughts, with Respect to a future State, who enjoyed not divine Revelation, is a demonstrative Proof, of two Things: 1. That Man is not now the Subject of right Reason; *i.e*. perfect Reason, for right or perfect Reason could never be at an Uncertainty concerning the Immortality of human Nature. 2. That Reason cannot be our Guide to a happy Immortality. How should it conduct us to a State, which it cannot prove, that it is, or will be? Is it possible that the Light of Nature should lead us to a State, which it cannot so much as see? Let us then bless God for the clear Light of Revelation; attend to it, and submit our Reason to that as our only Rule of Faith, in all Points of the greatest Moment to our present solid Peace, and future Welfare.

Thirdly, *I freely grant, that Reason is to judge of the Truth of Revelation: And I apprehend, that it is no difficult Matter to determine concerning any Revelation, whether it is from God or no:* Because Reason hath certain, and infallible, and easy Rules to guide her in forming a Judgment, in this weighty Affair.

1. We might be assured of the Falsehood of any pretended Revelation, which should maintain, that Men are not obliged to believe Mysteries. Whatever contradicts Reason cannot be true; and, therefore, it can be no Revelation from God, who is the Fountain of all Truth. It is not more contrary to Reason, to affirm, that *Bread* is *Flesh,* than to assert, that Things incomprehensible are not to be credited. For, the plainest Principles and fundamental Truths of natural Religion, are above our Comprehension; and, consequently, it can be no Doctrine of a divine Revelation, that we are not bound to believe, what we don't understand, or cannot account for. Nay, that can be no heavenly Revelation, which doth not demand our Assent to Principles, which are far above the Reach of our Understanding.

2. It is reasonable to conclude, that a divine Revelation, will enjoin the Fear and Worship of, and Obedience to God, in all Things.

3. Reason cannot but discern, that a heavenly Revelation, will recommend the Practice of Virtue, and condemn Vice; and urge the former upon us, by such Considerations and Motives, as are of the greatest Weight: And that it certainly will propose such Arguments to dissuade us from vicious Courses, as are most important and forcible. No Principle, that is not calculated to promote Holiness, and discourage the Practice of Sin, can come from God. Every Revelation from Heaven, must necessarily be, on the Side of Virtue, and against Vice.

4. We have evident Cause to object to the Truth of any Revelation, which should maintain, that human Nature never was in a better State, than it is at present. —That the Passions of Man were always as exorbitant, as now they be. — That his Reason was never more discerning, than now it is. — That Man, at no Time, was the Subject of better Habits, than now he is. — Each of these is contrary to Reason, and, therefore, neither of them can be true.

5. Without any Scruple, we might condemn a Revelation, which should teach, that God can approve of Vice, or Imperfection; for that is contrary to the infinite Purity of his Nature. Consequently,

6. It must be no Revelation from God, which pretends, that guilty polluted Creatures can be approved of God, and receive Rewards from him, on Account of their Actions. For,

if God cannot approve of Vice, how is it possible, that he should approve of a Creature, which is the Subject of Vice, as so consider'd? If God cannot delight in moral Imperfection, which is a self-evident Principle, neither can he take any Pleasure in him, who is the Subject of such Imperfection, as so considered.

7. It might be expected, that the Revelation of supernatural Truths, should be confirmed by supernatural Works. It is absolutely unnecessary to work Miracles, in order to gain a Belief of what, as soon as it is clearly stated and explain'd, necessarily approves itself to the Reason of Mankind. But, it is not unreasonable to expect the Confirmation of Principles, which are above the Light of Nature, by the Performance of miraculous Works: Because, that is the only *external* Demonstration we can have, in our present Situation, that God communicates to us the Knowledge of his Will, by any Creature. What Certainty can we have, that any Man is charged with a Message from Heaven to us, if there, is no Appearance of extraordinary Power in, or with him? None at all, but what arises from the Nature of those Doctrines he delivers. And, therefore, tho' their Nature might be such, as he could not possibly invent them, yet Men might refuse to attend to his Instruction, for want of some external Proof of his divine Mission, in the Character of a Teacher. Yet, this is no Objection, to what I subjoin.

8. The Nature of evangelical Doctrines is such, as Men could never have come at the Knowledge of them, without divine Guidance. That Men can invent Absurdities, or false Principles, which are repugnant to Reason, none may doubt; but they are not able to coin Mysteries. Nothing that is above the Light of Nature, can the Mind of Man arrive at the Knowledge of. And, therefore, if there are any Doctrines contained in the Bible, which are incomprehensible, besides those that belong to natural Religion, they are an *internal* demonstrative Proof of its divine Original. In my humble Opinion, the mysterious Doctrines of the Christian Revelation, are as full and undeniable Evidence of its heavenly Authority, as any Thing can be: Because, it is not possible for Men to devise any *absurd* Principles, but the Absurdity of those Principles may be discovered by Reason; and as there are Doctrines in the Word of God, which are either *absurd,* or *mysterious,* and Reason cannot prove them *absurd,* it clearly follows, that they are proper Mysteries, or such Truths, as the Wisdom of Man could never invent; and, consequently, it ought to be allowed, that they are such, as no Man would ever have thought of, without supernatural Instruction. This is so full a Proof, that they come from God, that fuller Proof cannot be given of it. So far are the Mysteries of the evangelical Revelation, from being an Objection to it, that they are an *invincible* Argument in its Favor. If the Opposers of Gospel-Mysteries, cannot plainly prove, that they are Absurdities, they ought to allow, that they are incomprehensible Truths, not discoverable by

Reason; and, consequently, that the Men, who first discovered them, must have been divinely inspired. This Reasoning seems to me to be clear, easy, and infallible, and its Force really *unanswerable*.

Fourthly, *Reason is to judge of the Sense of Revelation: And it is capable of understanding what that expresses; otherwise, no Assent to its Truths could reasonably be expected from Men*.

1. It is to consider the Import of the Language of Scripture, which is plain and intelligible. It is to observe the grammatical Order and Construction of the Sentences, wherein God hath declared his holy Will to us, without offering the least Violence to them.

2. The Business of Reason is, to compare *spiritual Things with spiritual,* or one Part of divine Revelation with other Parts of it, upon every Subject, in order to discover the Harmony of its several Parts, and the Agreement of its Doctrines throughout the whole. A Revelation from God cannot contain opposite Principles. For Truth is certainly *one,* and *uniform,* and eternally *consistent*.

3. Reason is to infer Conclusions from Premises, which Revelation delivers. And this may be done with Certainty, provided, we proceed carefully, in considering the true Sense of the Propositions, wherein some Truths are contained, from

which other Truths are evidently deducible. For Instance, we often read that God is one; and we cannot but observe, that Christ is filled God, and hath divine Perfections, and divine Works ascribed to him; and that the Holy Spirit is so called, and hath such Attributions given to him, as well as the Father. The just and necessary Consequence is, that according to Scripture, God is *one,* and also *three*. We are sure he cannot be *one,* and *three* in the same Sense, for that is a manifest Contradiction, he therefore, must be *one* essentially, and *three* personally.

4. As there are some Subjects, which Reason is able to understand the true Nature of, and figurative Expressions are used about those Subjects, that will guide us in the Interpretation of such improper Modes of Speech. We certainly know, that God is a Spirit, and is not composed of Parts, and that he is not the Subject of any Passion; when therefore, we find Eyes and Hands, *etc*. ascribed to him in his Word, we necessarily understand those Attributions in an improper Sense: So likewise, when Anger and Repentance are attributed to God, we rationally understand them in an analogical Sense.

And the same Rule of Interpretation is to be observed, when Christ is said to be a *Vine,* a *Door,* and the *Morning-Star, etc*. This Rule ought also to take Place, when Christ says of the Sacramental Bread, *this is my Body*. His Language is as

plainly improper, as it as, when he says, *this Cup is the New Testament, in my Blood*.

5. But it is not allowable to explain away the proper Import of Scriptural Terms, Phrases, and Expressions, on Subjects, whereof Reason cannot be a Judge, as to their Truth and Nature without Revelation. This is the *fatal* Mistake of *Socinian* Writers, on almost all the peculiar Doctrines of Revelation. They appoint Reason to be Judge in such Articles, as come not within the Compass of natural Religion; but are peculiar to reveal'd, *viz*. The real Distinction, and proper Deity, and Unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Doctrine of Satisfaction by Christ's Death. Of Justification by his Obedience: And of the Sanctification of sinful Men by the divine Influence. Because what is said on these Subjects, seems not reasonable to them, they take the Liberty to explain away the proper Sense of the Language of Scripture on these Points of Doctrine, not considering, that neither of these Principles, is a Branch of natural Religion; but that they are all peculiar to reveal'd. They, therefore, set up Reason, as a Judge, in Matters above its Sphere, and determine without Rules or Principles to proceed by, concerning the Nature of these Heads of Doctrine, which is irrational. Reason hath a Right to judge in all Truths, which are discoverable without the Help of Revelation; but it has no Business to fit as Judge, on Principles, that it could know nothing at all of, without the Bible. In so doing, Reason is no better than a *rude,*

audacious Usurper of the Judgment-Seat: And *none* of its Decisions, on these Truths of *pure* Revelation deserve the *least* Regard.

CHAPTER THREE OF MIRACLES

MR. *Foster* entertains an Imagination, that in order to the Production of miraculous Effects, the Exertion of divine Power is not necessary, and esteems this so clear a Point, that it will not admit of Dispute.

I. *It cannot, I think,* says he, *be disputed, that superior created Beings, may be capable of performing real Miracles,* that they *may enable a Man to do what is above the ordinary Powers of human Nature*. *

** Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation, Edit. 3, page 50.*

I beg leave to ask, why this may not be disputed? Have we such plain and evident Proof of the Truth of this supposition, that it is unreasonable to doubt of it? If so, it must be either,

1. Because, It is demonstrable, that they are capable of conveying to Men, from their own superior Abilities, greater Power than God has furnished human Nature with. Or,

2. It must be by an Act of their Will, that the supposed miraculous Effects are produced. Of the former, we have no Evidence; at least, none at all, that I can discern: And, with Respect to the latter, I am persuaded, that It is absolutely incapable of Proof. It seems clear to me, that Spirits good or evil, have *naturally,* no Power of acting upon Bodies; and if they have not, at is impossible, that they should ever obstruct, or cause Nature to exceed in its Operations, those Limits which the great Creator hath fix'd and appointed to it.

II. *As we know not what Degrees of Power such superior Beings are possessed of, nor, consequently, the utmost they are capable of performing, we can have no certain, nor even probable Rule, in most Cases at least, whereby to distinguish what Operations, are properly divine, and what are not.* *

* *Ibid.*

Prodigious! This is a most extravagant Supposition of the Extent of Power possessed by invisible Beings! Men may imagine, if they please, that all Nature is subject to the Will, and Control of Spirits; but they will never be able to give the least Proof of it. What! Can invisible Beings change the Nature of Bodies? Are they able to turn Water into Blood? Dust into Lice? Have they Power to make a solid of a fluid Body? Can they stop the Course of the Sun or Earth? Is it possible for them to cause the one or the other, which is supposed to move, to go many Degrees backward? Can

Spirits re-kindle the vital Flame, when it is extinguished in a Man, and re-unite a departed Soul, with the Body it has left? Are they able to give Sight to the Blind, by the Use of Clay? If Mr. *Foster* can persuade himself, that they are capable of performing such miraculous Work, he may, I think, believe any Thing, he shall please to imagine, is true. I dare venture to say, that he will never be able to prove, that the least Portion of Matter, will move at the Pleasure of an Angel, more than by an Act of the human Will: How then, will he prove, that they can perform such Operations, as cannot be distinguished from divine? This I cannot but account an enthusiastic Whim of the Author's; repugnant to Reason or Philosophy, and contradictory to Revelation; which assures us, *that God alone doth Wonders*.

III. He adds, *That as invisible Beings, superior in Power to Mankind, may perform real Miracles, and such as are of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind, we are not sure that God may not, for wise Reasons, permit this*. *

* *Page 51*.

1. He has not proved, that Spirits have a natural Power to act upon Matter at all.

2. Much less has he demonstrated, that they are naturally capable of making such Changes in the Nature of Bodies, that Omnipotence itself, cannot make greater; which they

must be able to do, if they can perform real Miracles of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind.

3. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God will ever permit of Miracles being wrought to confirm Error; if they have the least Weight, or if they in the lowest Degree tend to persuade Men of the Truth, of what they are done in Confirmation of: That is contrary to his Perfections.

4. I challenge Mr. *Foster* to prove, that real Miracles, (not to say of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind), were at any Time performed, in Favor of false Principles. If it is ever proved at all, that invisible Beings have a Power of working *real* Miracles, it must be, either from Reason or Revelation. It cannot, I apprehend, be proved from Reason. 1. Because, if they are *pure* Spirits, they cannot act upon Matter, but after the Manner of immaterial Beings, *viz*. by Volition *only*. Reason plainly teaches us, that the smallest Body is not subject to the Will of the human Mind, besides that Portion of Matter to which it is united. And if a Member of the human Body, throgh any Cause, becomes withered, that Member is no longer subject to the Will of the Soul, notwithstanding its Union with the Body is still continued. And, therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude, that the Will of a finite rational Being, can have no Influence upon Matter, but by a divine Constitution; and, that *that* Matter must be suitably disposed and in Union with a thinking Power, before it can be, at all, under the Direction of it. If this is true,

which, I think, cannot reasonably be questioned, then immaterial Beings, have not the *least* Degree of *natural* Power, to work Wonders in the material World. 2. It does not seem likely, that God would endue invisible Beings with a Power, which they are very rarely permitted to exert. For, to what Purpose are they furnished with Powers, which they are *almost always,* except in some *extraordinary* Cases, prevented exercising?

And must it not give Uneasiness to those powerful Creatures, to be almost perpetually under Restraints, and hindered from doing what they know themselves able to perform? 3. The vast Number of those Beings renders this Supposition the more unlikely to be true. If there are more in Number of these Beings, than Miracles have been wrought, then some of them, have never exerted a Power natural to them, which I think is unreasonable to suppose. I can't be persuaded, that the all-wise Creator would ever furnish any Creature, with a Power never to be exerted.

Nothing can be collected from Scripture to support this Opinion. 1. Good Spirits were used by God as moral Instruments, in effecting of his Will in many Instances of a miraculous Kind, both in a Way of Judgment on his Enemies; and in a Way of Mercy, in Favor of his People: But neither of these proves, that those miraculous Works were clone by their Power and Agency; or, that they were the Subjects of that Power, whereby those Wonders were performed, which

is the Point to be demonstrated. 2. Evil Spirits were used as such Instruments, in miraculous Works, sometimes, for the Trial of the Faith and Patience of God's People: So Satan was in the Case of *Job*. But we have no Reason to think from that Instance, that the Devil is the subject of a sufficient Power to enable him to raise Winds, to send forth Lightning, or to strike the Bodies of Men with Diseases. For *Job's* sore Affliction was *the Hand of God upon him,* tho' at the Will of Satan, {Job. 2:3-5}. The Scripture informs us of various Miracles being wrought by Spirits, and by Men, under the legal, as well as the evangelical Dispensation; but it no where tells us, that Spirits any more than Men, are the Subjects of a Power sufficient to produce such extraordinary Effects. Angels are superior to Men, in *Power* and *Might,* and they *excel in Strength*; but it is *wholly* of the *intellectual* Kind, which will never enable them to act upon, move, support, or change the Nature of Bodies. The weakest Man upon Earth, is able to bear up and carry some Portion of Matter; but a Legion of Angels have not a natural Power to support a *sinking Atom,* nor to move the smallest Body at Rest. The Breath of a Man for ought appears from Reason or Revelation, will have a greater Influence on Matter, than the united Volitions of an Army of Angels. How *wild* and *extravagant* an Imagination is it therefore, to conceit, as Mr. *Foster* does, that invisible Beings have a natural Power to work Miracles, of the *most astonishing and stupendous Kind*. He will as soon prove, that Spirits may be crushed to Pieces by a Weight of Matter, as that the Volition of any finite Spirit,

can so much as stir the smallest Body at Rest, or retard, or accelerate its Motion, when it is once moved.

Some may, perhaps, object to the Doctrine, I endeavor to maintain, that *God alone doth Wonders,* or that no Power short of infinite, can work *real* Miracles, and urge,

1. That the Magicians of *Egypt* changed their Rods into Serpents: And turned Water into Blood: And brought up Frogs upon the Land. I answer, 1. *Moses* and *Aaron* did not perform these, or such like Miracles, by their own Power. 2. Neither did the Magicians work those Wonders by their own Power; God himself was the Author of them. They desired the Production of such Effects, and divine Power produced them. 3. They are said to do as *Moses* and *Aaron* did, in the Plague of Lice, altho' the Effect did not follow, {Exodus. 8:18}. And, therefore, when it is said, in the former Instances, that they did them by their Enchantments, it is not to be concluded, that they produced those Effects, but that God wrought them. 4. It might be the Pleasure of God so to do, to try the Faith of *Moses,* to harden *Pharaoh's* Heart, and to bring the greater Confusion upon the Magicians, when he ceased to work Wonders, or to produce miraculous Effects at their Desire, that such Effects might be produced.

2. It is supposed that false Prophets may *foretell Signs, etc.* and that they *may come to pass, {*Deuteronomy. 13:1}.

Answ. The Apostle makes a Supposition of an Angel from Heaven, preaching another Gospel, than what he delivered; but it is not inferable from that Supposition, that any good Angel can, hath done, or ever will so do. Nor is it to be inferred from the former Supposition, that a false Prophet can, hath, or ever will foretell Signs, and work Miracles. The latter, is a strong Way of cautioning against Error, and the former against Idolatry.

3. Our Saviour tells us, that false Christ's, and false Prophets, shall shew *great Signs and Wonders*. ***Answ.*** *Lying Wonders* are to be understood, not real Miracles, as in {2Thessalonians. 2:11}. Stronger Attestation of the Truth of any Doctrine, cannot be given, than the working of Miracles in Confirmation of it, is. If the Voice of God was heard from Heaven, expressing some particular Truths; that would not afford us brighter, and fuller Evidence in Favor of those Truths, than the Exertion of his Power, in the Production of miraculous Effects, affords in Favor thereof. If it is conceived, that invisible Beings have an *innate* Ability to work Wonders, it may as reasonably be thought, that they are capable of forming an articulate Voice, and can convey Sounds to our Ears; and, therefore, we could not be more certain of the Truth, of what should be expressed to us, in that unusual and extraordinary Manner, than we may be of the Truth of what receives Confirmation by supernatural Works. And since there is no better external Means *devisable,* whereby divine Truths may be confirmed, than

miraculous Operations; it is a Reflection on the Wisdom and Goodness of God, to imagine, that he will permit of Errors receiving that Advantage. If Error may vie with Truth in this Matter: If the Doctrine of Devils may receive the same honorable Testimony, as divine Truths; then Truth, however important, can have no external superior Advantage in its Favor, beyond what may attend the vilest and most destructive Principles; which it is not reasonable to suppose. If this may be true, then Christ, and his Apostles, argued not in a *certainly* conclusive Manner, the Truth of the Doctrines they delivered, from those extraordinary Works, which they wrought in Confirmation of them: Nor were the Jews so culpable, as they every where represent them, for rejecting Proofs of their divine Mission, which are not of an incontestable and infallible Nature, which Miracles cannot be, if the Devil himself, is able to perform such, as are of the most *astonishing* and *stupendous* Kind.

Farther, Christ who is the Head and Lord of all created Beings; as Man was not the Subject of that Power, by which the Miracles he wrought, were effected: For the *Father did the Works*. The human Will of our Saviour had not such mighty Efficacy; all his miraculous Operations, were Effects of his divine Will. It was his *Spirit,* or divine Nature, that quickened, his *Flesh,* or his human Nature *profited nothing*. Now if Christ, as Man, was not the Subject of that Power, whereby the Miracles he performed, were produced; can it be reasonably supposed, that invisible Beings, who are in

Subjection to him, are possessed of a sufficient Power to perform Operations, full as extraordinary as those our blessed Redeemer did, in Order to prove his divine Mission? The Man, who can persuade himself of the Truth of this, must, I think, have lost his Senses; and nothing can be so absurd, but such a Person may believe it is true. I am free to tell Mr. *Foster,* and the whole World, that I dare promise to believe the Truth of any Doctrines, *unheard,* which should receive *such* Confirmation, as Christ gave of the Reality of his divine Mission, and, consequently, of the Truth of those Doctrines he taught: Because, notwithstanding, all that this Gentleman has said, concerning the Power of invisible Beings, to work Miracles of the *most astonishing* and *stupendous Kind,* I know, as *Nicodemus s*aith, that ουδεί none, neither Man, nor Angel, can do the Works Christ did, *except God be with him*. And, I am sure, that no Man will, or can deceive me, who acts by divine Authority, and speaks under divine Direction.

"CHAPTER FOUR RULES OF INTERPRETING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES"

I. PUT no *absurd* Sense upon the Word of God: What is absurd or repugnant to Reason cannot be true. Reason is a Ray of Light from God, the Source of all intellectual Light and Knowledge; and, therefore, whatever Discoveries

Reason makes, they must be *just* and *true*. It cannot be the Design of Revelation, to extinguish the Light of Nature: It requires us not to be *inattentive* to the Dictates of our Reason; much less, does it oblige us to deny any *rational* Principles, and to believe what we certainly know must necessarily be false. *Divine* Faith is a *farther* Light than Reason; but it is not at all *contrary* to it.

II. We ought to be sure, that those Subjects whereof we set ourselves to judge by Reason, are within its Sphere. This is absolutely necessary; for if we pretend to reason about Doctrines, which are out of the Compass of the Light of Nature, except as we are assisted by Revelation, we shall argue without Rules; and, consequently, our Conclusions must be, at least, uncertain; if not false, and inconsistent with the Nature of those sublime subjects we take into our Consideration. Reason clearly discerns, that there is but one God; but it can never prove, that the personal Distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and their Equality is inconsistent with their essential Unity; which Mr. *Foster* suggests it can: *

** Rules for the profitable reading the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 1, of Sermons, pag. 255, 256.*

And asserts, that this Doctrine is evidently repugnant to Reason. But all the Reason he is Master of will never prove it so. A Plurality of Gods is repugnant to Reason; but the

Doctrine of the Trinity infers not a Plurality of Gods, but of Persons, or of free and understanding Agents, in the one undivided Being of God.

III. Bring no Principle to Revelation, but what is evident to Reason. Such Principles there doubtless are: As, that there is one God. That he is an infinitely wise, and powerful, and good Being — That moral Imperfection and Sin are displeasing to him. That Man is not what he ought to be, and, consequently, that he is not now, such as God made him. These are self-evident Principles: And it might reasonably be expected to meet with these Principles, in a Revelation granted to Men, in Case of such a Favor being vouch-saved to them.

IV. It is reasonable *wholly* to submit our Reason, to the Intrusion of the Word of God, in *all* Articles, which that, independent of Revelation, could never discover. The Light of Nature, is a safe and sure Guide, with Respect to the Certainty of *some* Truths: But there are others of the *greatest* Moment, which are *absolutely* out of its Reach, *viz*. How Sin might be attoned for. — How a guilty Creature, which has lost an Interest in divine Approbation, may be justified in the Sight of God. — How depraved Man may become holy and happy. These are Things of the *utmost* Consequence. Of each of these, Reason is entirely ignorant; and it must so be, because they come not within the Compass of natural Religion. Reason cannot doubt of the Felicity of *Innocents*;

but it can never resolve whether *Criminals* shall be happy, or in what Way it will become the Perfections of God, to recover them from deferred Ruin. This is evident; for the Light of Nature cannot make Discoveries of Truths, that are not contained in that Law, which it was under in its State of Perfection; it is absurd to suppose that it is capable of making such Discoveries. And since none of these Things are included in, or pointed out, by the Law, Reason must necessarily be *totally* unacquainted with either of them. Hence, it follows, that the *only* proper Business of Reason, in these Points, is to consult what Revelation delivers on those Heads, and entirely to give up itself to the Instruction of the Word of God, and readily, and thankfully embrace, what is expressed in the holy Scriptures, dating to those Subjects, without the *least* Hesitation or Dispute. It is a *base* Corruption of natural Religion, to maintain, as Mr. *Foster* does, that it is an *easy* Thing for Sinners to appease God, and a *difficult Matter* for them to affront, *i.e.* offend him. *

* *Page 256.*

It is a fundamental Principle of the Religion of Nature, that *constant* Obedience entitles to Life, and that moral Imperfection subjects to Misery and Death. 'Tis no rational Principle, that Men may transgress the Law of their Maker, with Impunity, or fail in the Practice of their Duty, without giving Offense to the Deity. And it is false, that we assert that God has consigned over any of his Creatures to irremediable

and endless Misery, without any Regard to their Actions, or Qualifications, which this Gentleman, has been pleased to affirm, we do. *

* *Ibid*.

In this, I am sure, he had no Regard to Modesty or Truth.

V. Put *no Force* upon the Language of Scripture; nor endeavor to give *evasive* Explications of it, on such Subjects, as are not Branches of natural Religion, under a Pretense of framing rational Sentiments concerning them. That is not to act the Part of modest Learners, in Points of Doctrine, wherein we certainly ought; but the Part of those, who need *no* Instruction from Heaven relating to Principles that are of the greatest Importance, and which we could never have acquired the least Knowledge of, without a supernatural Revelation. Reason ought not to dictate or object, on the *peculiar* Doctrines of Christianity, because it can know *nothing* about them, but by the Writings of the old and new Testament; and, consequently, it ought to be content *only* to learn, and confess its Ignorance.

VI. As Revelation inculcates the Principles of natural Religion, and also other Principles, it will, I apprehend, conduce very much to our right Understanding of the Scriptures, carefully to distinguish those Principles. In the former, Reason may, I think, be allowed to judge concerning

them: But as to the latter, its only proper Business, is to explain the Sense of the Words, Expressions, and Phrases of the sacred Pages; for it ought to embrace that, as the true Meaning of the Language of Scripture, on the latter Subjects, which it naturally imports. Either Men, by the Light of Nature, independent of Revelation, may acquire the Knowledge of all the Doctrines delivered in the Bible, or they cannot: If they cannot, then it is demonstrable, that Reason hath no other Rule of interpreting the Language of Holy Writ, on those Subjects, than this, which ought ever to be attended to, *viz*. the *obvious* and natural Sense it conveys. If this Rule had been observed, as it is highly reasonable it should *punctually* be, the Church of God, would have been free from numerous Heresies, with which, in almost all Ages, she has been pestered.

VII. Let the Expressions of Scripture be considered in their Connection, and the *real* Design of the divine Writers, be carefully observed. If they discourse of temporal Punishment, do not apply what they say on that Subject, to the eternal Condition of Men. This Error, the *Arminians* are guilty of in discoursing on the 18th Chapter of *Ezekiel*: And if the holy Pen-men treat of the eternal State of Mankind, do not interpret what they say on that Point, of the external Condition of Bodies and Nations of Men. This is a *notorious* Mistake, which the *Arminians* also fall into, in the Explanation, or rather Perversion of the 9th Chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*. By the former, they endeavor to

establish their Opinion, that it is the Will of God, that *all* Men should be eternally saved; whereas, the eternal Salvation of *none* is treated of in that Chapter; and therefore, all they urge from it, in Favor of their Sentiments, is *impertinent,* and *foreign* to the Scope of the divine Writer. And by the latter, they would prove, that it is the Pleasure of God, to afford to some Bodies of Men greater *external* Privileges, than to other Nations. Whereas, it is the future State of Men, that is there discoursed of; and, consequently, all their Reasoning upon that Place is *forced* and *unnatural*.

VIII. Allow *every* Word its *proper* Sense, and do not attempt to explain away the *true* Meaning of a Scriptural Term, tho' you may find it used, in a lower and different Sense, sometimes. As the *Anti-trinitarians* do the Term of God, when it is applied to Christ. Do not pervert the sacred Scripture in those Places, where the important Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction is treated of; by criticizing on Prepositions; and think that *that* momentous Truth is sufficiently refuted, if you can show, that *Hebrew* Particles, and *Greek* Prepositions, by which the full Sense of that Doctrine is expressed, are used to different Purposes, in some Instances, and on other Subjects. This Sort of Criticism the *Socinians* deal much in: They run through the Scripture, and if they can but find, that those Particles and Prepositions are used in a different Sense on other Subjects, and in other Places, they will *rashly* insist upon it, that such a Meaning, those Particles and Prepositions cannot have, when used on

that Subject. This is *bold* and *impertinent* trifling with the Word of God, whatever Show of Learning there is in it. This Part Mr. *Foster* acts, in Relation to the Term eternal, when it is applied by the Apostle Jude to the Punishment inflicted on the Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; he restrains it to temporal Punishment. *

* *Page 262.*

Because, as I suppose, he can dare to charge God with *Cruelty,* if he should punish *Criminals* without End.

IX. Compare the several Parts of sacred Writ together. By this means, you may obtain the most convincing Evidence of particular divine Truths, and of the Truth of Revelation in general. But see well to it, when you compare one Part of the Scripture with another, that the Holy Writers, treat of the *same* Subjects, and that they consider them in the *same* View. If you fail in this, you will *unavoidably* make them contradict one another, and run yourself into dangerous Mistakes. This is *a fatal* Error, into which, the *Socinians* and *Arminians* fall, in comparing what the Apostle *Paul* and the Apostle *James* deliver, concerning Justification. The Apostle *Paul* treats of the Matter of our Acceptance with God, and most clearly and fully proves, that not our own Works, but that the Obedience of Christ is the *sole* Foundation of our Justification, in the Sight of God. And the Apostle *James* shows us what Faith it is, which embraces that great Benefit,

and what are the genuine Effects of that Faith. The evident Design of the former is to establish the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, without our personal Works: And the Intention of the latter is, to show that good Works certainly attend and flow from that Faith, which apprehends the justifying Righteousness of Christ, and that *no* Man hath sufficient Ground to conclude upon his Justification, who is not the Subject of *such* a Faith.

"CHAPTER 5 OF HERESY; METHODS TO BE TAKEN WITH HERETICS; CALVIN'S CONDUCT TOWARDS SERVETUS CONSIDERED".

THE Term Heresy, is sometimes used in an indifferent Sense, and intends no more than a certain Sect. So it is in these Words: *For as concerning* τή Αιρεσεώ ταυτή, *this Heresy, or Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against* {Acts. 28:28}. It designs evangelical Doctrines, and the Profession of them. No evil Meaning attends the Use of the Word, when the Apostle *Paul* says of himself, *that after the most straitest Sect,* or Heresy, of the Jewish *Religion,* he *lived a Pharisee* {Acts. 26:5}. But *pernicious* Principles, and such as are of *dangerous* Consequence, must be meant by Heresy, in this Text: *Who privily shall bring in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction* {2Peter. 2:1}. It is an Enquiry of

great Importance, what Notions are to be accounted heretical: Every Error in Opinion, relating to religious Subjects, is not Heresy.

I. I shall endeavor to show, what Heresy is; or what Principles are heretical. In my Apprehension, any Opinion which dissolves the Obligation to Christian Obedience; which overthrows Christian Worship; which subverts the Foundation of Christian Faith and Hope is heretical.

1. *To deny, that the Law is a Rule of Conduct to Christians, is an heretical Principle*. This is the Heresy of the *Antinomians* and *Libertines*. It certainly dissolves all Obligation to Duty, and gives a most licentious Liberty; a Liberty to perpetrate all Manner of Vice without Restraint. Some have been charged with holding this Principle, who utterly abhorred it. I confess, that a certain Writer hath delivered himself, as I think, a little inaccurately on this Subject; which may have occasioned some Persons to fall into a Mistake in this Point. He makes Condemnation essential to the Law; which it is not; for that belongs to it, as it is a *Covenant,* and not as it as a *Law merely*: And the Promise of Reward on Condition of our Obedience, belongs to it, as it is a *Covenant,* but not as it is *a Law*. This Author maintains, the Believers Obligation to love God and his Neighbor, and to perform all those Duties which Love dictates; but not as enjoined with a Threatening annexed, which is not essential to the Law, as a Law; but as it is a Covenant. The *bare* Command of God is a Law: His

Command with a Promise of Reward, in Case of Obedience, and a Denunciation of Penalty, in Case of Disobedience, is more than a Law. Believers are not under the Law, considered, as in the Form of a Covenant: Hence there is no Condemnation to them. But they are under it, considered simply, as it is a Law; and not as it promises Life on Condition of Obedience, and threatens Death for the Want of it. For there are proper and peculiar to it, as in the Form of a Covenant. Either, God will proceed towards Men in Judgment, according to the Desert of their personal Actions: If so, it must be granted, that his Law will include in it, a Threatening of Death for Sin; and a Promise of Life, on Condition of Obedience, if that Threatening and Promise are not expressed. Or, he will proceed towards them, according to what Christ hath done and forfeited for them: If so, then his Precepts can have no Promise of Reward, nor Threatening of Punishment, annexed to them, on the Score of their Behavior. A Law therefore, under which such Men are, who will be proceeded towards, in the former Manner, must contain a Curse, as well as a Promise of Favor; and its Nature is necessarily federal: But a Law, under which the latter are, contains not a Curse, nor a Promise of Benefits; it hath nothing of the Nature of a Covenant in it. Yet, still, it is a Law, tho' not in the Form of a Covenant. This sufficiently answers, in my Opinion, what Mr. *Lancaster* advances on this Subject. In his *Vindication of the Gospel, with the Establishment of the Law,* chap. 16 and 17.

2. *To assert, that Christ is a Creature only, is Heresy.* His proper Deity receives such clear and full Proof from Scripture, according to the natural Sense of the Language, it uses to express his Divinity by; that fuller Proof of it is not necessary, nor need be desired. And the Doctrine of his proper Deity, is of the greatest Moment. That is the Foundation of the religious Honors we pay to him, and of the religious Confidence and Trust, we repose in him, as well as of the raised Expectations we form from him. And, therefore, those who divest him of supreme Glory, as they act a most injurious Part against Christ, they also deprive us of the solid Ground of our Hope, as Creatures miserable and helpless; and if they entitle him to a Share in our religious Services, they teach us to worship the Creature, *besides* the Creator, *to do Service to one, who by Nature is not God,* which is condemned as *Idolatry* in the holy Scripture.

3. *The Denial of his real and proper Satisfaction for Sin;* is an heretical Principle. If he, by his Sufferings and Death. hath redeemed us from the Law's Curse, and secured us from divine Vengeance, to which our Sins exposed us; then he *made Reconciliation for Iniquity, or Peace by the Blood of his Cross,* and is a proper Object of our Trust, as we are guilty Creatures, for the Remission of our Sins, and a Deliverance from that Wrath, which is to come; then God appears to be just in our Pardon and Salvation, upon the Foundation of his Atonement: But if he has not so done, his Death, properly speaking, can have no causal Influence into

our Forgiveness; his Sufferings are not a proper Ground of our Hope, nor is the Justice of God manifested, or exercised in pardoning of our Crimes through him. This therefore, is a Heresy of a very pernicious Nature, and of dreadful Consequence.

4. *To affirm, that Men are the Cause of their Regeneration, either in whole, or in part, is Heresy*. If it is said that they are wholly the Cause, then the Efficacy of divine Grace, in that Work, is *totally* denied. And if it is in Part, ascribed to the Will and Endeavor of Man; or if it is asserted, that Men become regenerate, by their Will concurring with the Aids of a common Grace afforded to them then it is not the Grace of God, which effects their Regeneration, and that makes them *differ* from others; but an Act of their own, and therefore, they have Cause to glory; for they really have somewhat, as Christians, which, they did not receive from God, *viz*. *a Will to be holy*. Hence, I cannot but conclude, that this is an heretical Opinion, of a very injurious Nature to the Grace of God, and that it is calculated to maintain, an a *assuming* Apprehension of ourselves. Persons, who embrace these heretical Opinions, frequently, attempt to introduce them, into the Church of God, in an *artful* and *sly* Manner. They bring them in *privily,* or under false Pretenses, endeavor by *little* and *little,* to draw off the Minds of Christians, from the solid, and substantial, and pure Truths of the Gospel, in order to gain them over at length to their most erroneous Tenets. This is the Wisdom of the old Serpent, with which nothing of

the Innocency of the Dove is tempered. Let this be the Practice ALONE of Heretics. Truth, evangelical Truth, is so fair and beautiful, that there is no Necessity of introducing her in the dark, or under a Veil. Heresy's monstrous Nature needs a covering. Its hideous Shape, if seen in open Light, would strangely terrify the innocent Sheep of Christ.

Mr. Foster observes three Things relating to this Subject.

1. *That no* mere *Error* of the Judgment *can be Heresy*. *

* *Vol. 1 of Sermons, page 281.*

1. If this Observation is true, then it is trifling to speak of heretical Principles, there can be no such. Let a Man's Temper, his Intention, his Views, and his Conduct be what they will; they have nothing to do with his Notions, they are neither *better* nor *worse,* whether he is a Person of Integrity, or a Hypocrite and Deceiver. Truth is Truth, and Error must be Error, let the Persons, who embrace the one or the other, be what they may; religious or profane, virtuous or vicious. 2. Then it is impossible to discover Heretics, without the Knowledge of Men's Hearts, or an Acquaintance with the secret Views, which influence them in their Conduct. 3. Then, in Fact, a Man may with Safety to himself, deny the most important Truths; provided, he seriously thinks, that he

is right in the Denial of them, let him so imagine through any Cause whatever.

2. *No honest Man,* says he, *can possibly be an Heretic*. *

* *Page 282*.

Answ. Can a dishonest Man embrace Truth? I suppose it will be allowed, that he may. Is the Nature of Truth the same? Or is it changed, when held by a dishonest Man, and a Hypocrite? I imagine this will not be granted. I farther ask, if an honest Man, may not imbibe Error? Mr. Foster supposes he may; then, I desire to know, whether an Error retains its Nature, or continues to be Error, when it is embraced by an honest Man? If the Affirmative should be allowed, then, if any erroneous Opinions are Heretics, the honest Man, who holds those heretical Notions, must be an Heretic. But Mr. *Foster* understands by Heresy, *Insincerity* or *Hypocrisy*; and, therefore, it is impossible, according to his Apprehension: that there should ever be any heretical Opinions. Truth can't be Heresy; neither is Error Heresy; as he thinks: Now if neither Truth, nor Error, is Heresy; there is not, there cannot be, any heretical Principles. What then can the inspired Writer mean by *damnable Heresies,* he declares, Come Persons would *privily* which bring in?

3. The *Gentleman* adds, *how can we certainly know, at least, in most Cases, whether a Man be an Heretic or not*? *

* *Page 288.*

I answer, how indeed? According to his Opinion, it is impossible, without a Revelation from Heaven. For, if the dishonest Man has but the Cunning to conceal his Hypocrisy; if he, himself does not let us know, by some Means or other, that he acts against the Dictates of his Reason and Conscience, we shall never be able to discover him. And, therefore, we can have no Concern, either with Heresies or Heretics. Nay, we cannot so much as know, whether there is an Heretic in the World or not: Nor, that there are any Heresies.

II. The Apostle gives us very plain Directions, how to proceed towards Heretics. *A Man that is an Heretic, after the first second Admonition, reject*. He is to be admonished twice; and if neither the first, nor the second Admonition, prevails with him, to give up his heretical Opinions, then he is to be rejected, or cut off, by a Christian Community, as an unsound and dangerous Member. And such a Procedure against him, is just and righteous; because he *is subverted*; that is, he is turned aside from the proper and only Rule of Christian Faith; and he *sinneth,* in putting of forced and unnatural Interpretations, on the Word of God, in order to defend his Errors, and stifle the Evidence of the important Truths, which he denies: And he *is self-condemned*; {Titus. 2:10-11}, that is to say, according to his own first Principle, as a Christian, he acts a sinful Part. For, his *first* Principle, as

a professed Christian, is, that the Scripture is the Rule of Faith; and that whatever Doctrines it contains are true, and ought to be believed. He acts directly contrary to this Principle, in holding of his heretical Notions, which is highly criminal. For Instance, when he reads that Christ is God; he will have it, that he is a Creature *only,* and not God. And when he finds it asserted, that *nothing* that is *made,* was *made without* Christ; in order to evade the Force of this clear Argument, in Favor of the proper Deity of our Saviour, he will except *himself,* and insist upon it, that though he was concerned in the Creation of all Things besides himself, yet he was himself created; and, therefore, *something* that is *made,* was *made* without his Concurrence, *viz*. himself. Or, if this appears, to be offering too great Violence to sacred Writ, then he will without any Reason taken from the Scope of the Place, interpret, that Assertion of the new Creation. However, he will not allow, that Christ is an Agent, in Works which are properly divine; but an Instrument only. And, why does he so interpret? Is it because the Scripture elsewhere teaches us, that our Saviour is a Creature only, and that in divine Operations, he is no more than an Instrument? No, and therefore, he in Fact denies those Principles, that are delivered in the Word of God; which he professes to be the Rule of his Faith, and by Consequence he is condemned of himself. Persons, who hold the heretical Notions, above mentioned, ought to be rejected by Christians, *viz*. they ought not to be admitted to Fellowship with them in Christian Institutions Men, who maintain the first heretical Principle,

viz. that the Law is not a Rule of Conduct to Believers, most, as I suppose, will allow, that they are unfit for a Participation in the Privileges of a Christian Society. And such, who embrace the other erroneous Opinions, before expressed, cannot regularly join in Christian Worship: If they do, they must worship a Creature; and if they distinguish upon Worship in their Minds; and pay *supreme* to God, and *subordinate* to the *Man* Jesus, then their Worship of Christ, greatly differs from that Worship, which Christians give to him, and wherein they seem to join, who believe him to be God, and as such adore him jointly with the Father. They cannot unite with Christians in Doxologies to Christ, as a Redeemer, because they do not consider him, as a *properly* meritorious Cause of the Pardon of their Sins, nor of their Peace and Reconciliation with God. How can they intreat with Christians, that *God would not enter into Judgment with them,* and proceed towards them, as their Actions deserve his Favor, or merit his Displeasure? Since it is their fixed Opinion that they are to be tried, judged, and proceeded towards hereafter, on the Foundation of their own Works.

Again, how can they join with Christians, in ascribing Praise and Glory to God, for his regenerating them by his holy Spirit? Seeing they maintain, that Regeneration is not effected by divine Grace; but that it follows upon an Act of the human Will, or that a Man becomes holy, because he chooses so to be, and that this his Choice is not produced by a super-natural Influence on his Will, determining it to make

that Choice. Mr. *Foster* maintains, with the *Socinians,* that *it is sufficient to believe, that Jesus is the Christ,* in various Parts of his Writings. For the Proof of which, he produces those Words of the Apostle *John*: *Whosoever believeth, that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*. *

* *Page 284.*

But this Text includes far more in it, than he, or they, are willing to allow. Christian Belief is not to be reduced to a single Article, by that, or any other parallel Scripture. For, to believe, that Jesus is Christ, comprehends many momentous Branches of revealed Truth, relating to his Person, his Offices, and Work, and Sufferings, and those Benefits, which we derive from him in that Character. That, as to his Person, he is *God's own or proper Son*: *The Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*. — That, as to his Offices, he is the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church. — That, as to his Work, as he is invested with these Offices, he instructs his People, atones for their Sins, and makes Intercession for them; and subdues their rebellious Hearts; gives Laws to them, conquers all their Enemies, Sin, Satan, the World, and Death; and defends their Persons in all Dangers, and from the Rage and Malice of their numerous and potent Adversaries. — That he died for his People, to make Reconciliation for their Iniquities. — That all Supplies of Grace are now derived from him; and that he will communicate to them consummate and endless

Bliss, in the future State. — These important Truths, with more that might be mentioned, are comprised in believing, that Jesus is the Christ. And, therefore, it is a vain Thing to attempt, to reduce the Christian Belief, to one single Article of Faith. If we do not believe those Particulars concerning Jesus, we shall be found to deny, that he is, what is designed by his Character of Messiah or Christ.

The Person who denies, that Jesus is *Jehovah, God, Immanuel, God with us*. — that he is the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church. — That he suffered *for us,* or, that *he was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities*. — That *he made his Soul an Offering for Sin,* and thereby, made *Reconciliation* for our Crimes. — That he has *brought in an everlasting Righteousness*; and so is of *God made unto us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption*; yea, our *All and in All*. I say, the Man who denies these Things, denies, that Jesus is in his Person, what the Messiah was to be: He denies, that Jesus has done, what the Messiah was to do; and, by Consequence, he denies him to be Christ. And since he denies, that Jesus is, what the Messiah was to be; since he denies, that Jesus has done, what the Messiah was to accomplish in Favor of his People, he is not a Christian. To give to Jesus the Name of Christ, and deny that he is such in his Person, Offices, Work and Benefits, as the Scriptures of the Prophets, represent the Messiah should be, in each of these Particulars; is only allowing him the Title, without the Dignity, Power and

Influence, which are *essential* to that exalted Character. If it as the Design of Mr. *Foster,* with the *Socinians,* to prove, by this Observation, that no more is necessary to be believed, in order to Salvation, than barely this, that Jesus is the Christ; and that whatever Truths relating to him in that Character, may be denied without any Danger to the Souls of Men: By what has been now said, it evidently appears to be false; and that Persons may allow, that Jesus was he, who was intended and described by that Character, and yet be Heretics. Heresy is a Denial of some momentous Branch of *revealed* Religion, and not of *natural*. To deny any Part of natural Religion is *Atheism*: To deny any fundamental Part of revealed, is *Heresy*. A Man may maintain all the Principles of natural Religion, and notwithstanding that, be a Heretic. For, Heresies do not intend the Denial of the Religion of Nature, that is *Atheism*; but they design the Denial of some *important* Parts of the Christian Revelation. To think otherwise, necessarily confounds *Atheism* and *Heresy,* which are not the same; but *entirely* distinct Things. And such Persons, who reject Christian Principles, or such Principles, as are peculiar and *essential* to Christianity, ought to be rejected by every Christian Community.

III. I beg leave to take into Consideration, the Conduct of *Calvin,* in the Affair of *Servetus*; who suffered at *Geneva,* on account of various heretical and blasphemous Notions, which he held, and endeavored all he could to propagate. That great Reformer was of Opinion, that Heretics ought to be

punished. And as this was his Persuasion, it is not to be wondered at, that he concerned himself in the Prosecution of *Servetus*. For, herein, he acted but agreeably to what he thought to be his Duty. He has often been reproached on this Account, and particularly of late, by several Persons. In order, that the greater Odium might be fixed on the Memory of *Calvin, Servetus* has been represented, in the most inoffensive Light, he could be, and the *worst* Things he expressed, which, I think, must raise the Indignation of every virtuous and pious Mind, have been carefully concealed, with this View, that People might think, that *Calvin* was so fond of his own Sentiments, and so impatient of Contradiction, that he would not stick to attempt the Ruin of any Person, who dared to oppose his darling Notions. How much of Justice and Generosity appear in the Relation, that some have given of this Affair, will soon be evident. *Servetus* his strict Regard to Truth, in Defense of his pious Principles, was such, that he most confidently asserted, what he knew nothing at all of. *

** Fuit enim hoc illi solenne: Scriptores quorum nunquam Libros inspexerat, audacissime citare. Fidelis Exposit. Errorum Michael Servet. page 523. Edit. Amst.*

And affirmed, that some eminent Persons were of his Sentiments, who held them in Contempt. *

** Tantum enim abest a Spe Resipiscentiae, ut non dubitet sanctis Viris Capitoni, & Oecolampadio aspergere hanc Maculam, quasi Socii fuerint. Calvin. Epist. Sultzer.*

His Modesty and Civility were so singular, that he could scarce speak to *Calvin,* without using this very *decent* Language to him, *thou liest*. *

** Toties enim illud suum mentiris, Calvino impingit, toties Magum, & Simonem Magum criminatur, meminisse pigeat ac pudeat Respons. Minist. Tigurin. Eccles.*

His Reverence and Awe arising from a Sense of the Solemnity of the Doctrine of the Trinity, whereof he wrote and discoursed, were so remarkable, that he often called it, *The Three-headed Dog*: *A devilish Imagination*: *A Monster of three Heads*: *A Deceit of Satan*. *

** Plus centum Locis Trinitas ab eo vocatur triceps Cerberus, diabolicum hantasma, Geryonis Monstrum, Illusio Satanae, & quid non? Fidelis Exposit. etc. page 549.*

And of the Sonship of Christ, his extreme Humility led him to express himself, thus: *If Christ be the Son of God, they must then say, that God had some spiritual Wife, or that be alone is both masculine and feminine, or an Hermaphrodite, was both Father and Mother*; *for the Import of the Word will not allow, that any one should be called a Father without a*

Mother. If the Logos *was a Son born of a Father without a Mother, tell me how he brought him forth, whether by the Belly, or by the Side.* *

** Debuissent ergo dicere, quod Deus habebat Uxorem quondam spiritualem, vel quod solus ipse masculino-foemineus aut Hermaphroditus, simul erat Pater & Mater, nam Ratio Vocabuli non patitur, ut quis dicatur sine Matre Pater. Si Logos Filius erat, natus ex Patre sine Matre; dic mihi quomodo peperit eum, per Ventrem an per Latus. Dr. Owen's Preface to his Answer to Biddle, page 44.*

So exceedingly careful was Man, to maintain such Notions of the Nature of God, as might influence himself and others, to adore him, trust in him, and praise him, that he declared, *It was a general Principle with him, that all Things sprung from God by Traduction*; *and that the Nature of Things is the substantial Spirit of God. — That all Creatures are of the proper Substance of God*; *and that all Things are full of Gods.* *

** Quum dicerit ex propria Dei Substantia omnes Creaturas, atque ita omnia Deorum plena, — Quid miser? Siquis Pavimentum hoc calcando, se Deum tuum calcare dicat, an non te pudebit tantae Absurditatis? Tunc ille ego vero & Scamnum hoc, quicquid oftendes, Dei Substantiam esse non dubito. Quum rursus objectum foret, ergo Diabolus substantialiter Deus erit: Ille in Cachinnum solutus, an hoc*

vobis dubium est, inquit? Hoc vero mihi generale Principium est; extraduce Del orta esse omnia, & Rerum Naturam substantialem DeiSpiritum. Fidelis Exposit, and page 522.

*Deity was substantially communicated to Devils, and to Wood, and to Stone. **

** Sed tantus fuit Furor, ut non dubitaverit dicere, Diabolis inesse Divinitatem. Imo singulis plures inesse Deos: Quia Deitas substantialiter tam illis quam Ligno & Lapidi communicata fuerit. Calv. Epist. Farol.*

Since *Servetus* was a Person of such strict Veracity, and so very courteous and civil in his Deportment: And since his Awe was so great, when discoursing or writing on theological subjects that he could not but use the most becoming Expressions upon those subjects: Since his Notions of the Nature of God were so well calculated to raise and cherish in the Minds of Men, a holy Dread of his incomprehensible Majesty; was it not a most inhuman and barbarous Act in *Calvin,* to get him imprisoned, and accuse him of Heresy and Blasphemy, before the States of *Geneva?* Who can forbear to censure him for so doing, as an Enemy to Liberty of Conscience, as an implacable and bloody-minded Man, against an innocent Person? None certainly, except those, if any such there be, who think it is not allowable, *to lye most impudently,* to behave *most indecently,* to speak on divine Subjects *most irreverently,* and to advance and

endeavor to propagate the *most unworthy Notions* of the Nature of God; Notions, which *naturally* tend to cause Men to imagine, that *God, himself,* may possibly become *such as the Devil is*. *Gentlemen* who blame *Calvin* for acting in this Affair, conceal those blasphemous Principles of *Servetus,* which is not fair and generous. *Grotius* speaking of this *Wretch,* says, *but concerning the Trinity,* Servetus *did not, in all Things, it may be, think right*; *for a Mistake is easy in Matters raised so far above the human Understanding*. *

* *At de Trinitate non per omnia bene sensit Servetus sieri potest; facilis enim Lapsus in Rebus adeo supra humanum captum positis*. *Operum Theolog*. *Tom*. *3, pag*. *503*.

Not a Word of his horrid Blasphemy; he was willing that should be buried in Oblivion. And the same learned Person, asserts a direct Falsehood, *viz*. that *the* Germans *knew nothing of* Servetus, *but what* Calvin *told them*. *

* *Germani de Serveto nihil sciverunt nisi quod ipsis dixit Calvinus, ibid*. *page 649*.

That is not true; *for he infected* Germany *with his poisonous Notions, long before* he suffered at *Geneva*. *

* *Nomen Serveti Hispani vobis auditum esse non dubito, qui ante annos viginti virulento Libello, multisque sacrilegis*

Erroribus reserto, Germaniam vestram insecit. Calv. Epist. Eccl. Francford. Pastor.

Grotius also represents him as humble and modest, and willing to be better instructed by *Calvin,* if mistaken, which is no more true than the former; for he used *Calvin* with the greatest Rudeness and Incivility *imaginable*.

These are not the only false Things which that learned Man relates, to injure *Calvin's* Name, and the Name of his Followers; which shall be proved from his own Writings, at any Time, if Proof of it is demanded. Mr. *Samuel Chandler* censures *Calvin,* for his Treatment of *Servetus*. *

** The Introduction to his Translation of Limborch's History of the Inquisition, page 64, 65.*

He calls his Veracity into Question, because he denies positively, that he held an epistolary Correspondence with the Papists at *Vienne,* where *Servetus* was condemned for his Blasphemy; but, as I think, without sufficient Ground. *Servetus* his Charge is of no Weight at all. And it is not likely, if it was Fact, that *Calvin* sent his Papers and Letters to the Papists there, that they would have such a Concern for his Reputation, as to conceal his having so done, when they knew, that he positively denied it. Nor would it have been prudent in him, to deny a Fact, which his worst Enemies were capable of proving at any Time: And since they never

have proved it, there is no Reason to think, that it is true. Tho' they had those Letters and Papers, they might not be sent by *Calvin*. He, doubtless, thought, that his strict Regard to Truth was so well known, that his plain Denial of this Matter, would be sufficient to wipe off the Calumny; especially, considering, that it was in the Power of his most inveterate Enemies to detect and expose his Breach of Truth, if he had been guilty of it: But in so thinking, it seems, he was mistaken. This *Gentleman* observes, that *Servetus could not differ more from* Calvin, *than* Calvin *did from the Papists*. *

* *Ibid*.

But this Observation is not true; for *Calvin* did not think, any more than the Papists thought at, that *the Substance of God is communicated to Devils, and to Wood and to Stone, which* Servetus affirmed: And tho' Mr. *Chandler* could not but know this, he thought proper entirely to conceal it, which, I think, was acting an unfair and ungenerous Part. He bestows the Name of *Protestant* on *Servetus*. *

* *Ibid*.

The Man was not of the Popish Religion, that is certain, neither was he of the Protestant Religion, as I think; for I am persuaded, that he had no Religion at all. That Person who can persuade himself, that when he *treads on a Stone or a*

Stool, he tramples upon *the Substance of God himself,* can't have any Reverence or Fear of the divine Being, I am confident. Mr. (alias) Dr. *George Benson,* some Time since, was pleased to publish in the *Old Whig,* what he calls a *brief Account of* Calvin's *burning* Servetus *for an Heretic*. And what he published at several Times in that Paper, he has favored the World, with a Publication of entire. In this Account, he blames *Calvin* exceedingly for his Treatment of *Servetus*: But is entirely silent concerning the wicked, blasphemous Principles, which this *Wretch* held, and confidently asserted. He is offended with *Calvin* for calling him, in his Writings, *a profligate Fellow, full of Pride, the proudest Knave of the* Spanish *Nation, and a Dog*. *

* *Page 11*.

I confess, that I do not like *hard* Names, should be used towards any, who appear to have a true Sense of Religion, tho' they may *err* in some Points of Faith; but I am not ashamed to say', that this *Servetus* was a *Dog,* of whom, those who had the least Concern for the Principles of natural, not to say of revealed Religion, did well *to beware* {Philippians. 3:2}. This *Gentleman* asserts, that *Calvin and others excited People, who had never read his Books, to condemn him unheard*. — That *they represented him as no Christian, as an Atheist, because he did not believe Christianity according to their Interpretation* — That *they violently seized and burned his Books, as full of Blasphemy*.

* *Page 23.*

The first of these Things, is entirely false, as will soon appear. The second was no unjust Representation: For the Man who can think, that the *Substance of Deity, of Devils, of Wood, and of Stone, is the same,* cannot have any Religion at all, I am fully persuaded. As to the third, I know no Harm in seizing and burning Books that are stuffed with Blasphemy, which his certainly were, if any Thing in the World may be so accounted. Farther, this *Person* says, that *they misrepresented his Doctrine, expressing it in their own Words, and fixing odious Consequences upon him. — And charged him with several Things which he utterly disowned.* *

* *Page 24.*

This was vile Conduct indeed, if Dr. *Benson* can prove it let him; but he never will be able to give Proof of it, and therefore he ought to be ashamed of exhibiting this *black* Charge against *Calvin* and his Friends. *Servetus, desiring that his Case might be considered by other Churches,* Calvin *readily consented to it*. And by a Decree of the Senate, *he drew up some Propositions out of his Books, which were given to him in Writing. He was allowed to retract what he might discover was not true, that he had wrote*; *and to refute any Thing that be thought* Calvin *had evilly wrested, and to*

*defend from the Word of God, what he apprehended was unjustly condemned. **

** Deinde quum ille provocaret ad alias Ecclesias: Libenter a me haec quoque Conditio suscepta fuit. Itaque clariff. Senatus noster Finem Ambagibus facere volens, decrevit ut Propositiones excerperem exServeti ipsius Libris, quae ei scriptae darentur. Eodem Senatus consulto permissum illi est, ut retractaret siquid videret a se non recte scriptum: Siquid vero deprehenderet male a nobis detortum refutaret: Siquid injuste putaret damnatum, ex Verbo Dei defenderet. Fidelis Exposit. etc. page 523.*

So says *Calvin*: And what could be fairer, than this? It is therefore false, that *Calvin* excited People to condemn him unheard. And it is not true, that he represented him *in a false Light*. Nor is it true, that *Calvin* charged him with holding several Things, which he *utterly disowned*. The *Doctor* says, *it is very likely, that his Enemies would not suffer him to speak to the People*; *

** Page 22.*

i.e. at the Place of Execution. This is a false Supposition, if *Calvin* may be credited; for he tells us, that *no Man hindered him from speaking*. *

**Nemo enim a loquendi ipsum Libertate prohibuit. Fidelis Exposit. Page 523.*

But, perhaps, no Credit is to be given to *Calvin* in this Affair. The *Doctor* ought to be ashamed, and covered with Confusion, for having published so many Untruths, in order to blacken *Calvin's* Character. Upon the whole, If it is considered, that *Calvin* was of Opinion, that blaspheming Heretics ought to be punished: If it be considered, that this *Wretch* did *blaspheme,* in such a Manner, as I think no *Apostate Spirit* would ever do: For I can't persuade myself to imagine, that the *Devil* would dare to say, that *Deity is substantially communicated to him,* or to *Wood,* or to *Stone*: If it is considered, that this Man did not *reason* but *rave*; that he did not *argue,* but *revile* that he did not *modestly oppose,* but *wickedly reproach,* what *Calvin* thought to be *sacred,* and of the *greatest Importance*: If it is considered, that his Notions were destructive of the *whole* of Religion, as well of *natural,* as of *revealed*: If it is considered, that *Calvin* proceeded in this Affair with Caution, and consulted other Ministers and Churches about it: I say, if these Things are duly considered, surely, though we may think, that he was mistaken, in conceiving, that Heresy is a Crime punishable by the Magistrate; yet, we can't reasonably censure him for acting in this Business, as a cruel and bloody-minded Man, against such as differed from him, which, some Persons seem inclined to do. A very wise, and moderate Person, says thus, upon reciting a Passage of *Servetus's,* which is above

mentioned. *To this Height of Atheism and Blasphemy had Satan wrought up the Spirit of the Man. So that I must say, be is the only Person in the World, that I ever heard or read of, that ever died upon the Account of Religion, in Reference to whom the Zeal of them that put him to Death may be acquitted*: *But of these Things, God will judge*. Socinus *says, he died calling upon* Christ; *those that were present, say the quite contrary*; *and that in Horror he roared out* Misericordia *to the Magistrates, but nothing else*: *But Arcana Deo*. *

* *Dr. Owen in his Preface to the Answer to Biddle, page 44.*

I will not say, that it was *undoubtedly* a righteous Thing to put him to Death; but this I will say, that I think, it was just with God to leave him, to sink into Horror and Despair in his Sufferings, on Account of his dreadful Blasphemies.

"CHAPTER SIX OF SCHISM"

MR. *Foster* having given us an Account of his Sentiments concerning Heresy; an his next Sermon, he discourses of Schism. Wherein, I apprehend, he is very defective; and that he also advances some false Principles. He declines giving a Definition of a Christian Society or Church, which was necessary to be done, in order to instruct the Reader about

the true Nature of Schism, whereof he treats. This is not a little surprising, because, the Words of his Text are addressed to a particular Body or Society of Christians at *Corinth,* incorporated together, to maintain Christian Principles, to celebrate Christian Institutions, and to exercise Christian Discipline, with a View to the Glory of God, and their Edification. A Number of Believers so united together, only constitute a Christian Church. And, therefore, a Man declining to hold Communion with any Church, *Roman* or *Reformed,* whereof, none can declare, how he became a Member, otherwise than by Birth, and not by any Act of his own, he cannot, with the least Appearance of Truth, be thought to incur the Guilt of Schism. Which one Observation sufficiently justifies all the reformed Churches, from the Imputation of Schism, the *Papists* fix on them, for their Separation from that corrupt Church: And it also justifies all particular Congregations of *Protestants,* in their Separation from the national Church, wherein they happened to be born. All Union among Men, whether of a religious or civil Nature, certainly ought to be founded in voluntary Consent and Choice; where it is not, a Separation may be maintained, without the least Violation of Right. Nay, a Separation in that Case becomes necessary, except we will submit to be wholly governed by others, without judging for ourselves, an the religious and civil Life; which would be the worst of Slavery.

1. The first false Principle, which Mr. *Foster* advances on this Subject is, that *Uniformity of Sentiments,* in Relation to

Christian Doctrines, is not necessary to Christian Communion. — That it is sufficient to believe, in general, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, including in it, the Belief of his Miracles and Resurrection, and the extraordinary Powers committed to the Apostles. *

Page 302. *

The Falsehood of this Principle appears, by what has been said above, on the Subject of Heresy. To believe, that Jesus is the Christ includes in it, many momentous Truths, which has been before proved, as I hope, beyond Contradiction. Christ is the Center and Sum of all revealed Truth. This *Gentleman* charges all such, who deny Communion to those, who believe that Jesus is the Christ, let their Sentiments be what they will, with Respect to particular Points of Doctrine, in a most severe Manner; as *unjust, anti-christian, and schismatical*. According to his Opinion, *Arians, Pelagians, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists* and *Baxterians,* ought to unite in Christian Fellowship. Whether we believe Christ to be God, or a Man *only*, it matters not. Those who are firmly persuaded, that he is God, and therefore adore him; may join in Worship with such as esteem him a *mere* Man: And, consequently, if he is the Object of their Worship at all, it must be of an inferior and subordinate Kind, and such as those, who believe him to be God, dare not give to him. It is according to him, of no Importance, whether, we believe that Christ, by his Sufferings and Death procured our Pardon, and

secured to us a Deliverance from Penalty or no. Such who are persuaded of the Truth and *vast* Moment of these Things, conclude, that they are under *infinite* Obligations to Christ, and express in religious Worship their Gratitude to him, on these Accounts, in the highest Strains of Praise. Persons, who account these Principles *merely* whimsical Notions, yea, *gross Absurdities,* may unite with them in all devotional Acts. It is according to his Opinion, not of the least Weight in Christianity, whether we think, that we are made *meet* for a better State, *solely,* by the Influence of the Grace of God upon us, or not. Those, who are fully convinced, that all their Holiness is derived from God, and that it is the *mere* Effect of his gracious Operations upon them, will ascribe to him their most hearty Thanks, for his making them *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. And such, who cannot believe, that their Choice of Holiness, is wholly and solely owing to the gracious, sweet and effectual Influences of divine Grace upon them, may join in all Acts of religious Worship and Communion, with those of the contrary Opinion; tho' in Conformity to their own Principles, they must necessarily refuse to give that Praise to God and his Grace, which the others most gladly ascribe to both. These brief Observations clearly enough discover the Absurdity of this Principle, *viz. that Uniformity of Sentiments,* with Respect to those Points of Doctrine is not necessary to Christian Communion. Mr. *Foster* may perhaps, esteem them *merely* Matters of Speculation, and of no Significancy or Weight; but they really are the Foundation of

all Christian Experience, and of Christian Worship and Practice.

As to what he supposes concerning *the Impossibility, of a Unity in Principles, among Christians, from the different Capacities of Men, the different Manner of their Education, their different Advantages, Passions, Prejudices, etc*. it is of no Moment at all. For Men, how much soever they may differ in these Respects, they can as easily understand, the true Meaning of the Language of Scripture, in general, as of the Language, this *Gentleman* uses, and consequently, they are able to collect from the Word of God, what Principles they ought to believe. The Bible is not penn'd in obscure and unintelligible Language, in the doctrinal Part of it, any more than it is in the moral Part. To Imagine that the Rule of our Faith, is hard and difficult to be understood, is a base Reflection on the infinitely wise Author of it.

2. Another false Principle is, that *Uniformity in external Modes of Worship, and Discipline,* is not a necessary Term of Communion. *

* *Page 306*.

It is doubtless necessary, that those who join in Acts of religious Worship, should be agreed in the Manner of it; how else can mutual Edification be promoted? And without it, due Order cannot be maintained, but Confusion must be

introduced. Or Dissatisfaction will attend the Minds of some, who think, that divine Service is not performed, in such a Manner, as it ought to be. And Members of the same Society, it is proper and necessary should be of one Mind with respect to Discipline, how else can it be duly exercised? Discipline is the orderly Government of a Christian Church. A Disagreement therefore, about the Nature and Manner of it, among the Members, must be attended with great Inconvenience to the Body, in a variety of Cases, which may happen. But Mr. *Foster* seems to be unacquainted with the Nature and Ends of Christian Fellowship, and therefore, he treats on this Subject: in such a *lax* and *general* Manner, as is quite disagreeable to both. In order to form a right Notion of Schism, it is necessary, to consider what a Christian Society or Church is, and the important Ends of Christian Communion. A Christian Church is a Number of Believers incorporated together, to maintain Christian Principles, to celebrate Christian Institutions, and to exercise Christian Discipline, as was before observed, in order to the Glory of God, and the mutual Edification of the several Members so united. And, therefore, 1. No Man can be a Member of that Body, but by a voluntary Choice on his Part; and the free Content of such a Society on their Part. 2. A Refusal to join with any particular Body of Christians, thus incorporated, is not Schism. For where a Union has not commenced, a Schism cannot be. 3. A peaceable and regular Departure from such a Society, for lawful Reasons, *viz*. for better Edification, or fuller Satisfaction, in Matters of Soul-concern, is not

Schism. Schism, as stated by the Apostle *Paul,* in his first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians,* consists in these Things. (1.) In a contentious Temper and Practice. There arose among the Members of the Church at *Corinth, Envying, Strife, and Divisions*: On these Accounts, he charges them with *Carnality, and walking as Men, and not as Christians* {1Corinthians. 3:4}. Those Animosities which were fomented among them, were from the *Flesh*. (2.) We are informed, that their Contentions were about the Ministers of Christ. Some of them were of *Paul,* in Opposition to *Apollos*. Some were of *Cephas* in Opposition to the two former, and others were of *Christ,* in Opposition to all the *three* before-named. (3.) They behaved in an irregular and unseemly Manner, when they were assembled together for public Worship. Or they were not united, as a Christian Body ought to be, in their religious Acts at those Seasons {2Corinthians. 11:18-19}. These Things are the Account of Schism, as it is stated by the Apostle, and charged on some of the Members of that Church. Hence we see, that Schism may be without a Separation from the external Communion of a Church. — That it is an Opposition, to those, who of Right, are the Ministers of a Church, or an Attempt to alienate the Minds and Affections of the Members from them. — That it is a Breach of Christian Love and Unity, which ought to subsist, and by all possible Means should be promoted, to the Honor of Christ and the spiritual Welfare of the Community. It appears, by the *Epistle* of *Clemens* of *Rome* to that Church, that they afterwards also fell into Schisms and Divisions. A

Part of them, *deposed their Bishops or Presbyters,* as that ancient Writer indifferently stiles them, *though they were found in the Faith and of good Morals*. *

* *Edit. Oxon. page 102.*

For which Reason, he, or rather, the Church at *Rome,* in whose Name that famous *Epistle* was penned, accuse them of Schism, and in a very importunate Manner, and with a great Variety of moving Arguments, beseech them to return to their Duty, as Members of the Body. If particular Persons, approve not of the Ministry of a Church, whereof they are Members, they have no *legal Right,* to endeavor to lessen the Esteem, which their Fellow-Members have of their Minister, to their Disturbance and Grief. If they cannot enjoy Edification, in that Community, under the Ministry of it, it is their *Wisdom* and also their *Duty,* to seek it where they may reasonably hope to meet with it, and peaceably and regularly depart from that Society, unto some other Church in Fellowship with that. A Man cannot resolutely continue in a Society, among whom he receives not Edification, which is the great End of Christian Fellowship, in order to carry any Point, that he hath in View, to the Grief of the Members of that Society, without incurring the Guilt of Schism.

CHAPTER SEVEN OF THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

IN treating on this Subject, I propose, to show wherein the Image of God consists, which, Man, in his original State, undoubtedly was the Subject of. — That, that Image is now defaced, or that human Nature is now corrupt and depraved. — Enquire how it became so. — And attend to Mr. *Foster's* Reasoning, to prove, that Man still bears the divine Image.

I. *I would show, wherein the Image of God consists, which Man in his Primitive State, undoubtedly, was the happy Subject of.*

1. This divine Likeness is proper to an intelligent Creature: Or a reasonable Nature only can bear that Image. The unintelligent Part of the Creation, cannot be supposed to have this divine Impress. Irrational Beings, it is impossible, that they should be like to God, in Wisdom, Goodness and Holiness.

2. As only intelligent Creatures can be like to God, or bear his Image, so, it is certain, that every such reasonable Nature, was originally. possessed of his Likeness: For, at as irrational to conceive, that the infinitely wise Author of all Things could create any Being imperfect, in its Kind. And, therefore,

3. Angels and Man, who are intelligent Creatures, it must be concluded, were formed with this divine Likeness. For, as the infinite Perfections of God, will not allow us to imagine, that he is the Author of any imperfect Work; and the Perfection of a reasonable Creature, is its Likeness to him, at necessarily follows, that both Angels and Man were created in the Image of God.

4. The divine Image does not consist in a Power of reasoning, or of discerning Truth, and the Fitness, or Unfitness of Actions: Nor in a natural Liberty and Freedom of the Will, to choose what the Understanding sees to be good, right, and fit. If the Image of God consisted in such a Power, so long as any Creature retains a Power of reasoning, of choosing, and refuting, he must be like to God. For unless Reason is lost, the divine Image cannot be lost. But,

5. The Likeness of the reasonable Creature to God, consists in a Perfection of Knowledge, in pure and perfect Love to him, and in a Disposition to obey his holy Will in all Things: Or in *Wisdom, Righteousness, and true Holiness*. Man as created by God, was not in the *least defective* in his Understanding; his Mind was clear, and his Reason was not liable to mistake, in enquiring into Principles, wherein his Duty, his Honor, and his Happiness were concerned. In his original State, he was absolutely free from every *evil* Bias. There was then no Inclination in him to what would dishonor his Maker, and injure himself. As in no Instance, he was

incapable of discerning his Duty, he had full Power to perform it, without Defect, or any Tincture of Evil attending him, in his Acts of Obedience to the Will of his God. Is this the present State of human Nature? Is the Reason of Man as clear, and as extensively discerning, as ever it was? Is there now perfect Love to God in the Heart of Man, and an entire Approbation of his Duty, in the whole Compass of it? And, is there no evil Inclination to the contrary in him? Are Mankind as able to practice all the Parts of their Duty, in as perfect a Manner, or without all Mixture of Sin; as ever Man was capable of discharging it? If Mr. *Foster* will maintain, that Men now bear the Image of their Maker, he must be obliged to assert each of these Things. And if he really can be persuaded, that human Nature, is at present, the Subject of perfect Knowledge, of perfect Love to Holiness, and Ability to practice it, in all its Branches, no wonder, that he very ill resents the base Representation, which some have given of our Nature, to the intolerable Disgrace and Reproach of it.

II. Man is not now in the Image of God. This is so clear a Point, that it is surprising Proof of it should be rendered necessary, by any Person's Manner of writing on the Subject. But it is so fallen out. Some seem to be so far blinded by Prejudice, that they cannot discern a Truth, which is as visible as the Sun at Noon. The following Particulars, I apprehend, most evidently prove the Imperfection and Depravity of human Nature.

1. *All have sinned*. The holy Scripture positively asserts this, and therefore, no Man's innocent. Every one of the Sons of Men, as under a Charge of Guilt, considered in himself. *Whatsoever Things the Law saith, it saith to them, that are under the Law*; *that every Mouth may be stopped, and that all the World may become guilty before God* {Romans. 3:19}. We have *all sinned,* and *come short of* his *Glory* {Romans. 3:23}. If any individual of the human Race, is of Opinion, that he has never violated the Law of his Maker, he is most certainly under an Infatuation of the worst Kind. *If we say, that we bare not sinned, we make him a Liar, and his Word is not in us* {1John. 1:10}. *If we say, that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us* {1John. 1:8}. Persons of the *best* Character among Men, are guilty of Sin: *For there is not a just Man upon Earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*; {Ecclesiastes. 7:20} consequently, Men, universally, are Sinners. And, therefore, no Man is now in the Image of God. Except we can persuade ourselves to think, that tho' Men have offended their Creator, they are frill such, as he made them; and that his lovely Image is in no Degree defaced, by the Guilt which they have contracted. — That, tho' they are guilty, they are perfectly holy, innocent and sinless in their Nature. *In many Things* (not in a few only) we *offend all* {James. 3:2}. No good Man therefore, is perfect in his Conduct. But, perhaps, Mr. *Foster* may think, that tho' Men are imperfect in their Behavior, they still retain the *original* Perfection of their Nature. — That Men are still in the Image and Likeness of God, tho' they act contrary to his

most holy Will. — That Imperfection, in the Practice of Duty, is no Proof of Imperfection taking Place in any of our reasoning Powers.

2. Every Man is, in himself, under a Sentence of Condemnation, and deserves to suffer Punishment. All Men, according to the righteous Judgment of God, are *worthy* of Death. Human Nature is lost and miserable; if any of that Race are not so; they have *no* Sin to be forgiven: Happiness is their *Due* upon the Foot of Right; it is not bestowed on them, as an Effect of Grace and Mercy; but on the Foundation of Justice: God cannot deny them his Favors, but he must violate the plainer Rules of Equity. They have no Need of a Saviour at all. If God is displeased with them, he must dislike his own amiable and beautiful Image. If he punishes them, he must give Pain and Torment to his *innocent* Creatures, possessed of that Perfection, with which he adorned them in their Creation, and on Account of which, they once were pleasing to him. In short, to say, that any Man now bears the Image of God, is to say, by necessary Implication, that *that* Man is happy, and that he cannot be miserable. — That God cannot but approve of him, and communicate his Benefits to him; because he necessarily approves and favors his own Likeness, in whomsoever it is. As certainly as these Things are absurd and false, so certainly is it false, that any Man is now in the Image of God.

3. If any Person hath this divine Impress upon him, he hath no Need of Regeneration, he is undoubtedly *fit* for the Enjoyment of God, whose shining Image he bears. A Communication of Holiness to him is unnecessary; he hath perfect Purity of Heart already. He cannot exercise Repentance. What should he repent of? Not that he is like to God; and unlike him, it seems, he is not. He cannot forsake Sin, for he has not at any Time fallen into the Practice or Commission of Evil. It is irrational to think, that he can abase and humble himself before God: He has no Cause of Self dislike and Humiliation, for he is as fair and beautiful as God made him, and therefore not to approve of himself, must reflect Dishonor on God his Maker, and he can't but consider him the Author of an unlovely Creature.

He has no Reason to acknowledge, that he is undeserving of the Favor, Protection, and Blessing of the Almighty; for he is not in his Disposition, and he has never been in his Behavior, any Thing, but what God may and must approve of, justify, and reward. All these Particulars are true of a Man bearing the Image and Likeness of God. If any such Man is now to be found, he may look down on the rest of Mankind, with an Air of Contempt, and say to all his Fellow-creatures, who are depraved: *Stand by yourselves, come not near to me, for I am holier than you*. I can never unite with you in any religious Services, because I am such as you are not. Such a Man cannot be the Subject of Regeneration, take it in what View soever you shall please; either, as the Infusion of good

Habits, or as a Reformation of Life; because he is not the subject of any evil Habits; and his Conduct, in all Respects, has corresponded with the holy Principles, from which he acted in every Part of it. Our Saviour has plainly and positively asserted the Necessity of the New-Birth, with Relation to every Man: *Except a Man be born again, be cannot see the Kingdom of God* {John. 3:3}. And, therefore, no Person is now possessed of the Likeness and Image of God, wherein Man was created. These Things are expressed in the holy Scriptures, in so plain and full a Manner, that I should think, none but such who are under the Influence of the most unreasonable Prejudice, can admit of a Doubt concerning their Truth. And they most evidently prove, that no Man retains the Image of his Maker, or the original Purity, and Holiness, which human Nature was once the happy Subject of.

Now, if it is fact, that Men universally are corrupt; that no Individual of the human Race, is free from the Taint of moral Impurity: Is it not foolish and absurd, fiercely to dispute how and when this Contagion infected our Nature? If, indeed, by disputing this Point, it could be demonstrated, that the Infection hath not reached some Persons among us; that there are some of Mankind, whom this moral Disorder has not touched; it is confessed, that the Contest is important, and the Success glorious; Innocence would be bravely and justly defended from an unrighteous Charge and Imputation of Guilt. But as the Distemper is epidemical, and no Man is

wholly clear of the poisonous Infection of Sin; it is a Matter of far less Consideration, in what Way the deadly Poison was conveyed, or how it diffused its destructive Venom into every one of the Sons of Men. Whether it is conveyed to us in our Conception and Birth, or whether it touched and infected us afterwards: To determine this Point with Certainty, is nothing at all to our Cure and Recovery. Infected we are, and I am persuaded, that no Man can remember the Moment wherein he was perfect, and wholly free from this *fatal* Disease. And, therefore, it seems probable to Reason itself, that we are depraved from our Birth; which I should think is sufficient, at least, to make Men modest, if duly considered, and careful not to deny the Account, which Revelation gives us of this Matter.

III. I shall enquire how we became depraved and corrupt. In this Enquiry we must be content to be guided and determined by Scripture; for tho' it is evident to Reason, that we are not what we ought to be, and, consequently, that Man is not now, what he once was; and though it seems probable to Reason, that our Corruption is as early as our Birth; a certain Demonstration of this Truth, is not, I think, to be obtained from Reason. The scriptural Account of this Matter, the Reader may please to take in the following Particulars.

1. *Adam begat a Son in his own Likeness, and after his Image*: {Genesis. 5:3} He had then defaced the Image of God, which was impressed upon him in his Creation. In

Consequence of his Rebellion and Apostacy, he had lost his original Purity, and was become the subject of Sin inherent. If therefore, he begat a Son like himself; that Son could not be in the Image of God, *viz*. pure and holy in his Nature; but he must be born corrupt and sinful.

2. *Job sp*eaking of human Nature, pronounces it impossible to bring a clean Thing out of an unclean: *Who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean? Not one* {Job. 14:4}. Which is a very strong Negation. It therefore, was his Opinion, that impure Parents cannot procreate Children, pure and holy; that such as the Parents are, such are their Descendants, in their Nature. Children we often see inherit the bodily Diseases of their Parents, from their Birth: And they derive from them a moral Impurity; for according to the Sentiment of this inspired Writer, it cannot otherwise be.

3. *David* confesses, that he was *shapen in Iniquity, and conceived in Sin* {Psalms. 51:5}. He could not intend any Sin of his Parents, in this humble Acknowledgement, for he is bewailing his own Impurity and Guilt, and not the Sins of others. Besides, there is evident Reason to conclude, that he designs inherent Sinfulness and Disorder; because he immediately subjoins, as the Opposite of it: *Behold thou desirest Truth in the inward Parts*. And, consequently, his Intention must be to express that moral inherent Impurity, that is contrary to Truth or Holiness of Heart, which God requires.

4. This Point is clearly expressed by our Saviour in these Words: *That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh*; *and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit* {John. 3:6}. That which is produced by the divine Spirit in Regeneration, is of a holy Nature; and by all just Rules of Interpretation, its Opposite must be understood of the contrary to it, *viz.* corrupt and impure Principles in the Heart. And, therefore, it is a forced Interpretation, to understand our Lord of bodily Weakness and Disorder, or of our Subjection to Mortality and Death, in Consequence of our descending from Parents that are so.

5. Corruption and Depravity is natural to us. *We are by Nature Children of Wrath* {Ephesians. 2:3}. We are naturally the Subjects of *Enmity against God,* and of an *Opposition* to his Law; and, consequently, we must be born with a moral Taint, or a sinful Impurity must attend us from our Birth.

6. *Death,* according to the Constitution and Appointment of God in his Law, *is the Wages of Sin* {Romans. 6:23}. And, therefore, it is Sin righteously charged and imputed by the divine Law) and that *only,* which subjects us to its Stroke. This is a Principle, which the Apostle maintains and argues upon, in the 5th Chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*. Now, since *Infants* are often attended, as soon as they are born, with s*ore, dreadful,* and *mortal* Diseases; which, after they have suffered *inexpressible Agonies,* bring them down to the *Grave*: tho' they have not personally sinned, it must be concluded, that they are guilty, in the Eye of the Law, some

other Way; and that they are the Subjects of Depravity and Corruption. If we will not allow this to be true; we must *unavoidably* grant, that God puts a *very great* Number of his *innocent* and *pure* Creatures, to *extreme* Torture; and *slays* them *without* any Desert. How that can be reconciled with his Goodness and Compassion; or how it can possibly consist with his Approbation of Innocence and Purity, is far, very far beyond my Capacity to discern. These Particulars are clearly expressed in Scripture: And I may argue from Experience.

7. If we are holy until we have corrupted ourselves, by actual Sin, through the Influence of the evil Examples of those about us: It is strange, that not one of our Race should preserve his Integrity! But that all Mankind should become sinful and impure. That not a *single* Man should retain the lovely Image of God, which he brought into the World with him; that every Individual of the human Race, should sin against God and deface his Image, is very amazing! And it is still more wonderful, that no Man is able to say, when he *loved God, with his whole Heart, and whole Soul, with all his Might, and with all his Strength!* That no Person can declare, at what Time, or by what unlawful Act, he lost the perfect Rectitude of his Nature, and became the unhappy Subject of Imperfection and Vice! If Men were really born pure and uncorrupt; though they might all become sinful and impure afterwards, through the Influence of bad Example and evil Custom; that no one should have a Consciousness of his

being perfect at any Time, nor when, and how, he became imperfect, is to me most surprising! And I can't but consider this, as a very *strong* presumptive Proof of our early Corruption, even from our Birth. However, this is certain, that no Person is the better, nor is in the better State now, for that Rectitude, which some may think all Men are born with; but every Man has lost; tho' none, from Experience, can tell when, or how, they lost it.

IV. I shall now attend to what Mr. *Foster* delivers on this Subject. He gives us an Account of the Image of God in Man, and takes it upon him to prove, that our Nature still bears or retains that Image. This divine Likeness, in his Opinion, consists in two Things.

1. Mr. *Foster* expresses himself thus, *He* (Man) *resembles his Creator in his Reason and Understanding*; *whereby he is capable of making very considerable Improvements in Knowledge, and of discovering all those Truths, which are necessary to the right Management of his Conduct, and to secure his Perfection and Happiness*: *In that he is not impelled and determined by mere Instinct, but is capable of considering and examining the Nature and Consequences of Things, and of making a deliberate and wise Choice*. *

** Vol. I. of Sermons, page. 82.*

Upon these Things, I observe, 1. That the Image of God cannot consist in a bare Power of reasoning, nor in a mere natural Freedom of Will to choose what the Understanding discovers to be *good, right* and *fit*; because both these are essential to an intelligent Creature: Unless, therefore, it is concluded, that so long as we continue Men or rational Beings, we shall bear the divine Image, that Image cannot consist in those Things. 2. Mr. *Foster,* I imagine, will find it a difficult Matter to prove, that Men are *capable of discovering all those Truths,* independent of Revelation, *which are necessary to the right Management of their Conduct, and to secure their Perfection and Happiness*. 3. Though the Will of Man retains its natural Liberty of choosing and refuting, yet as his Mind is the Subject of sinful Habits, it is inclined to Evil and averse to Good; he, therefore, voluntarily chooses the former, and freely refuses the latter, under the Influence of those Habits. But he is not free to choose Good and refuse Evil; because his corrupt Habits give a wrong Direction to his Will.

2. Says he, *The Image of God in Man has a Respect, farther, to the moral Rectitude in which be was created. The rational Principle within him strongly directed to all the Duties of Piety*; *to the Practice of Justice, and the Exercise of Benevolence. — And as to his Passions, they were all in a regular State, and subject to the Government of Reason*; *which was capable of keeping them within their proper*

Bounds; *that they might not, at any Time be extravagant and disorderly*. *This was the first happy State of Man*. *

* *Page 84*.
I answer, Man in his original State, had a complete Knowledge of his Duty, in all the Branches of it, towards God, towards himself, and towards his Fellow-Creature. And he had no Disinclination to it, he approved of it, as commanded by God, and as he saw it to be right and fit in itself. Besides, he had full Power to perform it. For, God did not exceed in his Commands the Ability, which he gave to his Creature, Man. And, therefore, there was more in Man, than the *bare* Direction of his Understanding to act what he law to be right and fit, *viz*. a Disposition to practise it. The Talk Mr. *Foster* has imposed upon himself, is, to prove, that we are in such a State now. That Man has a perfect Knowledge of his Duty. — That he has no Aversion to any Branch of it; but that he is at present the Subject of a Disposition to it, in its full Extent. — And, that we are possessed of sufficient Power to discharge our Duty perfectly, and without any Interruption in our Obedience. If these are not the Things he undertakes the Proof of, he means *nothing,* nor will prove *any* Thing to the *Purpose* by all his Reasoning; for if each of these Particulars is not proved, *no* Proof will be given, that Man still retains the Image of his Maker, because every one of these Things is *essential* to that divine Likeness, which Man in his *primitive* State was the happy Subject of.

Mr. *Foster,* in order to prove this extraordinary Doctrine, produces those Words of *Solomon*: *God hath made Man upright*; *but they have sought out many Inventions* **Ec 7:29**. Which Text relates to our first Parents, in their Creation-State, who were called **µada** or Man, as the Word is translated in this Scripture. *Male and Female created be them, and called their* Name **µada** or Man, **Ge 5:2** as it is rendered here. *Solomon* having took a View of the universal Corruption of human Nature; he looks back to the incorrupt State of Man, and pronounces him perfect in his Creation, or he attributes Uprightness and Perfection to him, in that State, not in his present State. Yet it is freely allowed, that the Mind of Man, when it is created and infused it, to his Body, is free from evil Habits; but it will never be proved, that it does not become the Subject of Disorder and Impurity in his Conception and Birth. Which must be demonstrated, or else, all that this *Gentleman* says, will stand *for nothing*. I suppose, that he is not able to produce any other Scripture, in Favour of his Opinion, than that before-mentioned, because he refers us to no other, for the Confirmation of the Point, and that bears no Relation to it. This Sentiment therefore, is destitute of Scriptural Proof, and, consequently, if it is ever proved, it must be from Reason and Experience. He does not so much as suggest, that it is capable of Proof from Experience. Reason plainly dictates, that the Mind of Man, since it is immediately created and infused of God, the Father of Spirits, (for of the Traduction of Souls, I cannot be

persuaded) it must in its Infusion, be entirely free from any sinful Taint; because a holy God cannot create any Thing impure: But Reason will never prove, that upon its Union with the Body, it does not become the Subject of Depravity. And as to Experience, that can give us no Assurance of our Minds retaining the Image of God. For, we have no Consciousness of having been perfect at any Time, nor how, nor when, we became imperfect and inclined to Evil. We know not the Point of Time, when we were not disposed to *Impatience, Pride, Anger, Envy, Malice,* and *Revenge,* and therefore, Experience is so far from furnishing us, with a Proof of the Purity and Perfection of our Nature, that if we were to attend to that only, we might conclude, that human Nature, was never free from those and other Vices, to which, we perceive ourselves inclined, as soon as we understand any Thing.

The Method which this Author proceeds to take to prove, that Men are still in the divine Likeness, is this.

1. Says he, *Mankind are reasonable Creatures. — The Reason of Mankind is able in all important Instances to distinguish between Right and Wrong.* *

* *Page 85.*

Answer, Man will always be a reasonable Creature; but, I suppose, that Mr. *Foster* don't think, that all Men will eternally bear the Image of God. The most profligate and dissolute among Mankind are rational Beings, we can't number them with Brutes; but surely the Blasphemer of the holy Name of God is not like him. All the Apostate Spirits or Devils in Hell are reasonable Creatures; but they are not like to God. If Intelligence is the Likeness of God, neither Men nor Devils will ever be unlike him, for they will eternally continue intelligent; if not, they will cease to be Men and Devils. I add, Men are not now perfectly acquainted with their Duty. Man in his original State had a complete Knowledge of it. We allow, that Men are able to distinguish between what is right and wrong in many Instances, and we know, that they always will be so, otherwise, they cannot have a Consciousness of Sin, nor can their Thoughts accuse them, but upon a Conviction, that they have done as they ought not to have done. And we are confident, that the Devil is capable of judging what is right and what is wrong. He, who suffers Punishment for rebelling against God, cannot possibly think, that Rebellion against the universal Sovereign is right and fit, though he continues to rebel against him. We dare not say, we cannot admit the Thought, that the Devil is like to God, though he knows what is fit and what is unfit, Neither can we be persuaded, that Men, who sin against God, bear his Image, although they can discern what is right and what is wrong, in various Instances.

2. In order to prove, that Men still retain the Image of God, with respect to moral Rectitude, he observes, that *they have understanding to direct the Impulses and Affections of their animal Nature*. *

* *Page 86*.

And pray, Sir, have not all Men? Have not the most wicked Persons on Earth this Understanding? — Will you therefore say, that they are like to God and bear his Image. You must be very *hardy, stupid,* and *impious* against your Maker, if you shall express this, or so much as once think it. *And, to form just Notions of Happiness*. *

* *Ibid*.

A Man may know that Sin will render him unhappy, or *worthy of Death,* and yet like it, and have Pleasure in it, not indeed, under the formal Notion of Sin; nor as attended with evil Consequences; but as it is agreeable to his vitiated and corrupt Taste. There be many Men, who are not destitute of this Understanding, that are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*. I ask you, Sir, if they retain his Image with Respect to moral Rectitude, if you shall say they do, you must maintain what is *horrid* to express, *viz*. that moral Turpitude, which is the Opposite of moral Rectitude, is — I will not name it; you know what I mean. — *That having a Principle of Reason and Liberty, they must be capable of*

knowing, loving, serving their Creator. *

* *Ibid*.

Suppose all this were true, it would not prove the Principle contended for. Without an actual Disposition to love and obey God, Men cannot justly be thought to retain his Likeness. The divine Image supposes not *only* a Power to love and obey our Maker, but a real Inclination to obey him. Again, though Men have a Principle of Reason, Reason in Man is now imperfect: And though they have a *natural* Liberty of choosing and refuting, which can never be lost they are under the Influence of sinful Habits, which incapacitates them to choose Good, and causes them to choose Evil. They have not a perfect Knowledge of God: I do not mean, Ideas of him adequate to his Perfections, such a Knowledge of God, no Creature ever had, nor can have; but I intend such a Knowledge of God, as is sufficient to influence them to adore and reverence him, as they ought to reverence and adore their Creator, Preferrer, and most bountiful Benefactor. Farther, they will always have this Principle of Reason and natural Liberty; but many of them, it must be confessed, will not always be in the Image of God. Once more, the Devil, himself, hath a Principle of Reason, or he is a thinking Power, and he also hath a natural Liberty, for his free Agency is not lost: Is he therefore, in the Image of God? Sure Mr. *Foster* can never think he is. The divine Likeness cannot consist in what Man can never be deprived of: Man

can never loose a Principle of Reason and a natural Freedom of Choice; neither can the Devil, and, consequently, the Devil and Man may have lost the divine Image, though both possess a Principle of Reason, and still continue free Agents. — *Of governing the animal Passions, and keeping them within their proper Bounds, and controlling them when they grow licentious and extravagant*. *

* *Ibid*.

The animal Passions or sensitive Lusts of Men, would not be criminal, if Reason was not placed in Man, to direct and check the Motions of his fleshly Appetite. Since it is, those Passions would never have been tumultuous and disorderly, if Reason had always duly discharged its Office, if it had never given some unwarrantable License to them. In any Instance, wherein those Passions are licentious and extravagant, Reason has failed of its Duty and a Man is involved in Guilt. Mr. *Foster* adds, *reasonable Nature has no evil Tendency, but directs to the Pursuit of Wisdom and Virtue, and to suppress all corrupt Desires*. *

* *Page 86, 87.*

Reasonable Nature may be corrupted, that cannot be denied, when it is depraved and corrupt it is reasonable, if it is not, it is certain that Devils and wicked Men are irrational Beings, which neither are. Again, corrupt Habits in the Mind have an

evil Tendency, if they have not, there is nothing in Devils, nor in any Man, that tends to Evil. Besides, corrupt Desires cannot arise in any reasonable Being, without Guilt and defiling the Subject of them. Vicious Desires stain the Mind and render it guilty, how soon soever they are suppressed, though not to the same Degree, as when they are cherished and gratified. And, therefore, that reasonable Nature, wherein they spring up, can no longer, justly be esteemed *innocent,* and retaining the Image of God. I am sensible, that some Men think, that *vain Thoughts,* and the *first* Motions in the Heart towards Evil, are *excusable,* because they find them *unavoidable*; but there is nothing, which my Soul *more abhors,* than this *abominable* Conceit. He asks, *is it not agreeable to human Nature to reverence the great Author and Governor of the World, and secure his Protection and Favor on whom we absolutely depend, by an Imitation of his Perfections, and Obedience to his Commands*. *

* *Ibid*.

If Mr. *Foster* means, that our Reason will determine, that it is just, wise, and fit, so to do, upon due Examination, it is true, and so will the Reason of Devils. But if he intends; that there is a Disposition in Devils, or in Men naturally, to imitate the Perfections of God and obey his Precepts, he can advance nothing, which is more false. It is one Thing for Reason to discern the Propriety and Fitness of an Action which is good, and another to incline to that Action.

The former, Reason, though depraved, is capable of in some Measure; but it is not the Subject of a Disposition to Purity and Holiness. Does Mr. *Foster* think, that a reasonable Creature, upon discerning the Wisdom and Advantage of being conformable to the Will of God, and the sad Consequences of the contrary, cannot but choose, desire, and endeavor after it? If this is his Opinion, he is greatly mistaken. The Devil and wicked Men know, that the Part they act, is prejudicial to themselves, and, consequently, that it is foolish. Farther, he asks, *does not Nature teach us to be Just and Charitable, to compassionate the miserable, and relieve the. distressed? Are not these Virtues suitable to our strongest Affections and Instincts? And the contrary Vices, by the universal Consent of Mankind, branded as inhuman and monstrous?* *

* *Ibid.*

And what of all that? Does the Knowledge of Duty necessarily suppose a Disposition to practice it? Must Men be absolutely ignorant how they ought to conduct themselves, if it is concluded, that the Image of God is greatly defaced in Man? This is a most impertinent Way of arguing, and confirms not the Point in Hand, in the least Degree. Again, says he, *is it not natural to us to seek and endeavor to promote our own Happiness, and, consequently, to mortify all those evil Appetites, which are the Sources of*

*Corruption and Misery? **

** Ibid.*

Men would not be miserable or suffer Punishment; but yet they freely choose the Evil of Sin, which subjects them to Pain and Misery. — Besides, that Person, who has any evil Appetites to subdue, is not in the Image of God, he is not such as God made Man. To suppose, that an upright perfect Creature is the Subject of evil Appetites is absurd, that Supposition, might lead us to conclude, that the innocent *Jesus* had such Appetites. Mr. *Foster* observes, *That our Nature abhors Rebellion against God, preying upon its own Kind, delight in Oppression and Injustice, and in the Misery of our Fellow-Creatures, and willful extravagant Desires which sink us below the Condition of Brutes*. *

** Ibid.*

Reason though corrupted is indeed able to discover the Turpitude of these Things, in some Degree, and certainly condemns them; but that notwithstanding, it consents to them all. He says, *This is not human Nature but a most dreadful Depravation of it*. *

** Page 88.*

Since this is a Depravation of our Nature, Men, who have ever sinned or rebelled against God, they are not in his Image. What is the Amount of this Reasoning? No more than this: That Men have some Sense of their Duty, and of the Danger which attends neglecting to practice it, and acting contrary to it. And, I imagine it is impossible to find a *single* Man, who knows, that he is a Man, *viz*. a rational Creature, that hath not such Convictions in his Mind, relating to Vice and its Consequences, how greedily soever, through the Impetuosity of his Lusts, he may practice it. *After all,* he *allows, that there is a Sickness and Disorder in our mortal Frame, introduced by the Fall, which, because of their Intimacy, may*: *in some measure affect the Mind*. *

* *Ibid*.

If we are in *every* Sense innocent, how shall this be reconciled with the Goodness of God, to ordain us to a Union with such a *sickly* and *disordered* Body, that proves a *Clog upon our reasoning Powers, and strengthens the animal Passions?* Temptations without us do not clog nor weaken our intellectual Powers; but this Sickness and Disorder of our mortal Frame do, Mr. *Foster* grants, and that they give Strength to our animal Passions, which render it difficult to Reason, to keep them in due Order. There is therefore, very great Danger of our Mind being diverted from its Duty, by the Strength and Impetuosity of these *disorderly* Passions, which are become natural to us, in Consequence of the Fall.

It is probable, that the Mind is corrupted at first, by the Disorder of the Body to which it is united, and which is a *Clog* upon it.

Mr. *Foster* proceeds to mention the Foundation of our Error, with Respect to these Things, which, he says, is, *either we have taken our Estimate of human Nature from the brutal and sensitive Part of it, and not from the intelligent and moral, and represented to our Minds, as the original State of it, such Dispositions and Habits, as are of our own creating*. *

* *Page 89.*

How he will distinguish the evil Appetites of the brutal and sensitive Part of Man, from the acting and Concurrence of the Mind, in framing of impure Ideas, I cannot tell, to me it seems impossible. This is no better, than a *base* and *sinful* Invention to wipe off Abundance of Guilt, which Men Contract. If the Mind frames no unholy Imaginations, if all its Conceptions are pure, if all its Desires are holy, if all its Acts are such as the Law requires, and if it is not the Subject of any unlawful Wish, which is agreeable to the sensitive Part, a Man is innocent; but if on the contrary, the Mind of a Man frames any impure Image, or any unholy Conception, he is *verily guilty* in the Sight of God, for, the *Thought of Foolishness is Sin*. Again, we allow, that the Reason of Man is capable of discovering, in some Measure, what is his Duty,

and that Holiness is commanded by God; but we deny, and he has not proved, nor ever will prove it, that Man naturally is disposed to, and takes Pleasure in Holiness. Farther, we do not judge of these Things, by the evil Dispositions and Habits of our own creating, but by the Word of God: Yet, we must beg leave to say, that since, we know not the Time, when we were absolutely free from Sin, and when we had not sinned: Since we are wholly insensible of having been at any Time, the Subjects of Perfection, we cannot but conclude, that our Corruption, was early or from our Birth, as the Scriptures tell us. If Mr. *Foster* should say, that he remembers a Time, when he was *perfect* and *sinless,* I should he so *rudely* free, as to tell him, *that be is a Liar and the Truth is not in him*. He adds, *Or else we have understood particular Passages of Scripture, which give the Character of the most profligate and abandoned Sinners, as describing the natural Temper of all Mankind*; *and strained strong figurative Expressions, which are very frequent in the Eastern Languages to their highest Sense*. *

* *Ibid*.

It is certainly the Doctrine of the Scripture, that all regenerate Persons were once in a State of Sin and Death. — That they were *by Nature Children of Wrath, even as others*: Whether they were notoriously wicked and profligate in their Conduct or not. We conclude upon the Truth of this not only from what is said of them before their Regeneration, but also from

that Depravity, which they confess themselves to be the subjects of after it, and which, more than all Things else, occasions them deep Distress and Sorrow. They have confessed, that their *Wounds stink and are corrupt,* that their *Loins are filled with a loathsomeDisease* {Psalms. 38:5-7}. That they *are as an unclean Thing, and that all their Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags* {Isaiah. 64:6}. That they are *vile*. That they are *undone* and Persons of *unclean Lips* {Isaiah. 6:5}. And, that *in many Things* they *offend* {James. 3:2}. That they have not attained *to the Resurrection of the Dead,* that they are not as yet *perfect* {Philippians. 3:12}.The Reason why some Men scorn to make such humble Acknowledgments, is not because they excel them in Holiness; (happy would it be for them if they were at all like, not to say if they equalled those Persons therein) but because they know not the *Plague of their Hearts,* and because they will not allow that to be Sin, which certainly is Sin, and will be found Sin another Day, to their inevitable Destruction, if the Grace of God prevents not their eternal Ruin, by convincing them of their *Vileness,* and humbling them for it, before that dreadful Day overtakes them. I add, the holy Scriptures were penn'd for the Reading and Instruction of other People, besides the *Eastern* Nations, and therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, that God would not express his Will to Men, in stronger Language, than the Nature of those Subjects, concerning which he speaks, required, lest they should thereby be led into any Mistakes relating to them. This is no other than a *foolish* Evasion, made use of to

obscure that shining Evidence, which is given in the Word of God, of various divine Truths: And it is a *tacit* Acknowledgment, that if the Language of Scripture is interpreted, in such a Sense, as it will *really* bear, Men must necessarily grant the Truth of such Principles, as they are determined to dispute against. Besides, if we do not carry up the Sense of Scripture higher than it will bear, we do not strain it. We only allow it so much Force, as is suitable to the Strength of its Language. While some Men dare to lessen that Force, because they *fondly* imagine, that its Phrases are too *bold* and *strong* to express the true Nature of the Doctrines discoursed of. I subjoin, the Corruption of human Nature is asserted in plain Language, and not in figurative Modes of Speech only, as was before proved, I hope beyond any solid Reply.

CHAPTER EIGHT OF REGENERATION

NO Man that is unregenerate is *fit* for the Enjoyment of God; nor can participate of future Blessedness. The Sanctification of the Spirit must precede eternal Salvation. Holiness is a Meetness for Glory, and *without* it *no Man shall see the Lord*. Persons who are in a State of Unregeneracy, are *dead in Sin*: Are *under the Dominion* of it: Are *averse to God, and not subject to his Law*. These Things are true of some Men *only, or they are true of all*. *If these characters belong to some Men only;* then, a Part of Mankind have *no* Need of

Regeneration: They are *fit* for Heaven without any divine Work upon them: And, therefore, it can't be said of such, *Except* they are *born again,* they *cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. If all Men are *dead in Sin,* previous to this Work upon them, then every Individual of Mankind needs the Grace of Regeneration. The Words of our Saviour, *Except a Man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God,* are indefinite; and will not admit of any Limitation. They clearly and strongly suggest, that *every* Man must become the Subject of Regeneration, in order to the Fruition of God. This important Point, Mr. *Foster* takes no Notice of, in treating on the Subject; which is a very *great* Defect: A Defect it is, that affects the most momentous Branch of this evangelical Truth, on which he discourses: And what is still worse, he gives such a Definition of Regeneration, as will naturally lead us to conclude, upon his Principles, that it is not necessary to some. It is, says he, *A Man's sincerely and entirely renouncing the corrupt Sentiments he had before maintained*; *the irregular Passions he had indulged*; *and the wicked Practices be bad been guilty of*. *

* *Vol. 3 of Sermons, page 260.*

Upon his Principles, I think, it may be certainly concluded, that *many* Men stand in no need of being born again. If a Man has always been so happy, as not to have embraced the *absurd* Doctrines, of the Deity of Christ; the *Reality* and *Perfection* of his Satisfaction; Justification by the Imputation

of his Righteousness; the distinct Personality, and Deity of the Holy Spirit; and the Necessity, and certain Efficacy of his Operations, upon the Souls of Men: He has *no* corrupt Principles to renounce. Besides, there are many Persons, who have not *indulged* irregular Passions; who have *always* been *sober, just* and *religious* in their Conduct. And, consequently, they have not been guilty of *wicked* Practices. Such Persons, therefore, have *no* Need of being born again, upon his Principles. Men, who have *ever* been virtuous and moral, in their Behavior, cannot be the subjects of this Change, As corrupt as Mankind are in general, there be *many,* who have kept clear of *wicked* Practices all their Days. And, therefore, according to this Account of the *New-Birth,* they cannot be the Subjects of it: And, by Consequence, this Definition of Regeneration, is undoubtedly false. For, there is no Man of whom, it can be truly said, that he may enter into the Kingdom of God, without this divine Work upon him.

Regeneration is the Infusion of holy Principles into the Hearts of Men, viz. Faith, Hope, Love to, and a true Fear of God, which Principles discover themselves, in a holy, spiritual and humble Walk or Conversation. Hence, Christians are said to be *the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus, unto good Works {*Ephesians. 2:10}. Against this Account of Regeneration, he objects various Things; and gives a *false* Representation of our Opinion in this Matter, *viz*. That we conclude, *that Mankind are purely passive in a Reformation from Vice to Virtue*. *

** Page 261.*

We conclude no such Thing; as he must be sensible, if he has consulted what we have said on this subject. And if he has not, he ought to have done it, that he might not have exposed himself in this Manner, to the just Censure of *Ignorance,* or of what is worse, Unfairness and Disingenuity. What we conclude is, that Men are *purely* passive in the Infusion of holy Principles into their Hearts: But we always maintain, that they are active, in Consequence of such Principles being infused, in reforming from Vice to Virtue. As the Apostles were passive in receiving an Ability to speak with Tongues; but were active in speaking: We say, that Men are wholly passive in receiving the Principle of divine Life; but, that they are active in forsaking Sin, and practicing Holiness: As *Lazarus* was passive in the Reception of Life, when he was in the Grave; but was active in coming out of it: So we say, that Men are entirely passive in the Reception of new, and spiritual Life; but, that they are active in the Exercise of that Life. We contend, that Faith and other Graces are given, and not acquired; but we full well know and always assert, that Men are active in the Exercise of those Graces. Tho' we say, that Men are passive in the Reception of Power for spiritual Acts; we are not guilty of such Nonsense, as to say, that they are inactive, when they exert that Power. Neither is it true, upon our Principles, that *Men are mere Machines, and void*

of Intelligence, and free Volition, *

* *Page 262.*

as this Writer suggests: Man is still an intelligent Creature; and he retains his natural Freedom of Will and Choice, tho' he is corrupt and depraved: Nor does our Opinion suppose the contrary. And yet it is certain, that Men may become incapable of understanding spiritual Things, and may be the Subjects of a fixed Aversion, to God and his Law; if they are not naturally and universally such. Notwithstanding that Incapacity to discern heavenly Things, in their true Nature, they are intelligent reasonable Beings; and notwithstanding that fixed Aversion to God, and his Law, they retain their natural Freedom of Will, and they freely choose what is evil. Free Agency is one Thing, and a Disposition to what is good, is another. The Devil is a free Agent; he has not lost the natural Freedom of his Will; but since he has no Disposition to what is good, he refuses to choose it, and he is free in that Refusal. And Men, tho' depraved, are free Agents; but they have naturally a Disinclination to what is spiritually good; and therefore, they refuse to choose it; and they act freely in that Refusal. And they have a strong Bias to the contrary, and therefore, they choose it; and act freely in that Choice. The Grace of God in regenerating us, renders us capable of making a wise Choice, and under the Influence of his Grace, such a Choice we freely make. It is a gross Mistake, that free Agency necessarily supposes an Ability to choose Good, and

refuse Evil; if it doth, then a reasonable Creature can never be so far corrupted by Sin, but that he will eternally be able to choose the former, and refuse the latter; tho' left by God, under the Influence of vicious Habits. Devils and damned Spirits then choose Good and refuse Evil; for they are, and ever will continue to be free Agents. Nor do we suppose, *that vicious Men are destitute of Power to reform their Conduct*. We allow, that *they are capable of it, and that they are exhorted to it,* as Mr. *Foster* observes. But Reformation of Conduct we don't take to be Regeneration; tho' it certainly attends it. We are persuaded, that a dissolute Person may become regular and virtuous, and yet not be born again. He represents it *as ludicrous and trifling, ungenerous and cruel, and insulting, to exhort Men to the Practice of what is not in their Power*. *

* *Page 263*.

If, therefore, they cannot love God, *with all their Heart, and Soul, and Strength,* then, if God requires this perfect Love to himself, of them, *he is ludicrous and trifling, cruel and ungenerous, and insulting*: Tho' their Incapacity to obey that Command is not from God; but from Man himself: Or it is the Effect of a criminal Behavior in Man. This, therefore, is not Reasoning, but *downright Raving and Madness*. He farther, observes, that *it would be absurd and cruel to threaten Men with Punishment, or promise them a Reward to fly in the Air, or become invisible, or to do any Thing that is*

beyond the Extent of their natural Powers. *

* *Page 264*.

The Truth of which, I am persuaded, every Man will soon perceive and readily grant: But what is it to the Purpose? Nothing at all. If I could allow myself to be pleasant, I should treat this Impertinence with diverting Ridicule; but the Seriousness of the Subject forbids it. Men are exhorted to reform from Vice, and practice Virtue, which they have a Power to do. But they are not commanded to regenerate themselves. Nor are Promises of eternal Life made to them, upon a Reformation from Vice, which this Writer seems to suppose. If Man ever was the Subject of a sufficient Power to keep the Law of God perfectly, that Power he is still possessed of, or he as not; I suppose it will be granted, that he is not. That Power he lost, in Consequence of Sin, or it was taken from him by his Maker, without any Offense committed on the Part of Man. This is so absurd, that I imagine none will allow it can be true. Man's present Inability, therefore, to perform his Duty in a perfect Manner, must be the Effect of Sin on his Part. God in commanding Man to keep his Law, perfectly, requires no more of him, than he furnished him with a Power to do. But he never rendered *Man capable of flying in the Air, or becoming invisible*: And, consequently, tho' it would be absurd and cruel, to require him to do either of these Things, it follows not, that it is so, to enjoin perfect Holiness on Men, and

condemn them for the Want of it, tho' they are now unable to practice it; because their Defect of Power to obey the divine Law, wholly springs from a criminal Behavior in Man. This Reasoning, therefore, is *so impertinent,* that nothing can be expressed, which is *more impertinent* and *trifling*.

Mr. *Foster* proceeds in his Impertinence, (for I cannot call it Reasoning) and says, *if Men were entirely passive in the Affair of Regeneration, — it would then be impossible, that any Man should be regenerated sooner than he is*; *and, consequently, all his Deviations from the Rule of Right, would be unavoidable and innocent*. *

* *Page 265*.

It is true, that no Man could be regenerated sooner than he is; but it is not true, that all his Deviations from the Rule of Right, were unavoidable in his Unregeneracy for, tho' an unregenerate Person, thro' the Want of a spiritual Principle, cannot spiritually love and obey God, yet he is able to practice Virtue and shun Vice, while in that State; at least, in a far greater Measure than many do. And, tho' Imperfection in Virtue is unavoidable, thro' the Corruption of human Nature, it is not *innocent*; for, as has been before observed, the Defect of Power, to practice Holiness in the utmost Extent the holy Law of God requires, is owing to Man himself. Besides, there is not only a Defect of Power in Men, to obey the Law perfectly; but there is in them an Aversion to

it, and therefore, they are rightly charged by God, in his Word, *with Contumacy and Obstinacy, and the most egregious Folly*. And their Crimes are *justly attributed to free Choice, and willful Determination*. This Writer goes on to argue from the Nature of Things, against our Opinion.
And,

1. He concludes, *that deplorable and horrid is the Destiny of Men, and very ungracious seems to be the Case and Providence of their Creator, if they cannot know what is their Duty, and wherein their true Happiness consists*. *

* *Page 267.*

How does it appear, that God is wanting in Care and Goodness to Men; because human Nature is become, thro' Sin, incapable of understanding perfectly what ought to be practiced, and wherein true Happiness consists? What? Because Man, by his Rebellion against his Maker, has destroyed himself, shall we dare to charge God with a Want of Care and Goodness to him? And if any one of our rebellious Race, shall have the impious Front to exhibit such a Charge against the Almighty, shall his bold, and rude, and insolent Conduct be justified, and pass for Reasoning? With Men of Piety, Wisdom and Modesty, I am sure that it never will. *To suppose,* says he, *that a farther supernatural, and inward Illumination is necessary to give a just and right Idea of Scripture Doctrines*; *is in Effect, to assert, that the*

Scriptures are of no Use at all; *and that the inward Teaching, is the only Revelation of the Mind of God to Mankind*. *

* *Page 267, 268*.

Prodigious! Still more *Impertinence!* The Sense of Revelation may be understood, without an internal and supernatural Illumination; or Men by a due and proper Exercise of Reason upon Revelation, may easily discover the Principles therein expressed. But in order to discern the Importance, Excellence and Glory of those Principles, an internal Illumination is necessary. Yet it can't be said, that the Scripture is a Revelation, unrevealed; or that the Scriptures are of no Use at all; or that the inward teaching is the only Revelation of the Mind of God. The Scripture is a Discovery of divine Truths; those Truths may be known, as they are revealed in the Word of God, without any supernatural Illumination of the Mind. This inward Illumination acquaints us in some Measure, with the excellent Nature of those heavenly Truths. This internal Work, informs us not of the Meaning of Scriptural Terms, Phrases, and Expressions; they are understood without it; and, consequently, the Doctrines of the Scripture are understood without that inward Revelation. So that the Bible is not a Revelation, unrevealed: Nor are the Scriptures useless. They are all, and the only Revelation of divine Truths we receive from God. This inward Illumination is not a Discovery of Truths, but of the Glory of Truths; which being clearly revealed, may be

known to be Truths without it. If some Men cannot, or will not distinguish between knowing the Truth of evangelical Principles, and understanding the divine Glory of those Principles, we are not answerable for that. We are flare of this; that they are properly distinct in their own Nature. As Men, we know the Truths which are revealed in the Scriptures; and as Christians, we discern their excellent Nature, and taste their Sweetness, and derive the highest Consolation from them.

2. Mr. *Foster* thinks, that Men are able *to acquire lively Impressions of religious and moral Truths. — That they can attain an Acquaintance with the intrinsic Excellence of the Christian Religion, and discover its infinite Importance to their present Peace, and everlasting Felicity.* *

* *Page 268, 269.*

It is very considerable, that the Christian Religion is allowed, to be of infinite Importance to the present Peace, and everlasting Felicity of Men; for this liberal Grant, the *Gentleman* deserves our Thanks. But it is not of such Importance to these great Ends, but that Men might effectually secure them both without it, as he thinks. It is a Mistake, that Men, are able of themselves, to do the Things expressed above. For they are blind, their Minds are obscured: Their *Understanding is darkened, and they are alienated from the Life of God, thro' the Ignorance that is in*

them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts {Ephesians. 4:18}. They are dead in Sin; and have not a Principle of spiritual Life, from which holy and spiritual Acts spring. They are Enemies to God, and *not subject to his Law,* nor *can they so be* {Romans. 8:7}. For there is a fixed Disinclination and Aversion in them to pure and spiritual Religion: And until a contrary Disposition is wrought in them, they will not be inclined to that Spirituality and Holiness, the Law requires of them. Add to these Things, they are under the Dominion of Sin, that bears Sway in their Hearts, even in the Hearts of those, who are virtuous and moral in their Behavior, until the Work of Regeneration is wrought in them. He observes, *that the strongest Disinclination does by no means infer an utter Impossibility*. And urges, that *Man must still be a free Agent, and have it in his Power to be either virtuous or vicious*; *or else he is absolutely incapable of Religion, and moral Government*. *

* Page 269.

I answer, Men may reform from Vice, and become virtuous, without Regeneration: There be many virtuous Persons, who are not regenerate. Again, unregenerate Men freely choose, what is displeasing to God, through the Corruption of their Hearts, and the evil Bias of their Will. Besides, this Manner of Reasoning, seems to suppose, that Power to practice Holiness, and avoid Sin, is essential to an intelligent

Creature, and can never be lost, through any Cause at all, which is certainly false.

Reasonable Creatures will eternally be the Subjects of moral Government: And it will always be their Duty, to love, adore, and obey God; and it will be their Sin, not to love, adore, and obey him: But this infers not, that they will eternally have a sufficient Power to enable them to put forth these Acts. It is now the Duty of Men to practice Holiness perfectly; but they have not Ability equal to it; and yet it follows not, that their Defects and Sins are involuntary. The Will of Man freely choose what is evil, and freely refuses what is good, as it is vitiated and corrupted by Sin.

3. *Every other Disinclination,* says he, *may be conquered, and every other wrong Habit*; *but what is of a religious Nature, may be reformed, and that therefore, those also may*. *

* *Page 269, 270.*

But how does that appear? Other Disinclinations, and other wrong Habits, that are not of a religious Nature, they are not criminal, nor are they the Effects of a criminal Behavior in human Nature. These Habits, whatever may be intended by them, since they relate not to Religion, they are not any sinful Taint of the Mind: The Vitreosity, therefore, of Men, does not incapacitate them to conquer those Disinclinations,

and reform those Habits. But such wrong Habits, as relate to Religion and Holiness; they are the moral Taint and Depravity of the Mind; and they render that incapable of discerning the Excellency of heavenly Things; and influence the Will to refuse them, and to prefer carnal Delights to them. It is no *Dishonor to Christianity, that Men cannot discern its intrinsic Excellence, **

** Page 269.*

tho' this *Gentleman* takes it upon him to say it is. For, as the Sun is not less glorious, because blind Men cannot see it; neither is the Gospel, because some Men discern not its amazing Lustre and Glory. And since Man has by Sin rendered himself impotent, it is not *injurious to the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity,* that he is so. Nor is it *any Advancement of the Glory of the Creator,* to assert, that there is at present, *a Power in Man to do good*; tho' Mr. *Foster* conceits it is: Because he is not now *such* as God made him. Some Weakness and Defects he allows do attend human Nature; his Account thereof stands thus. *The animal Passions of Man are turbulent. — That being a little indulged, they will control and over-rule the Dictates of Reason., That an unhappy Constitution of Body, and the various Disorders to which it is subject, are a heavy Clog upon the Mind, and cloud and interrupt the Freedom and Liveliness of its Operations. — That Objects of Sense make powerful Impressions on human Nature*; *and it every where*

*is surrounded with numerous Temptations to Vice and Irreligion. — That evil Examples often times corrupt it early, etc. **

** Page 271, 272.*

On this Account, we may remark as follows. 1. Man would never be the Subject of turbulent Passions, without Guilt on his Part. For it is not reasonable to suppose, that God created him with such irregular and disorderly Passions. The Turbulence of the Passions of human Nature, therefore, is a strong Proof, that Man is not now in the Image of God. 2. Man was not created with an unhappy Constitution of Body. As Reason will not allow us to imagine, that the Mind of Man, in his Creation, was the Subject of Ignorance and Vice; neither will it permit us to conceit, that his Body was formed with an unhappy Constitution, and various Disorders attending it. And, of Course, the Unhappiness of the Constitution, and the Disorders of the Body, must be *purely,* the Effects of Sin in Man. 3. He limits the Depravity of human Nature, to the inferior Part of it, the Body. Is there then no Ignorance in the Mind, or Incapacity to discern the excelling Glory of divine Things? Is there no Hardness of Heart? Is that as susceptible of heavenly Impressions, as it ever was? Do no other ill Effects follow upon Man's Rebellion against his Creator, than such, as the Body is the Subject of? So this Author seems to apprehend; but it is an Imagination most remote from Truth. The holy Scripture

represents the Mind of Man, as blind, and ignorant, and covered with Darkness: His Will as stubborn and perverse: His Heart as hard. That represents him as dead in Sin: As under the Dominion of it: As averse to God and his Law: As disposed to sinful Pleasures. And, it assures us, that Men cannot discern spiritual Things; that they cannot be subject to the Law of God; that they cannot come to Christ; or believe in him. We must therefore conclude, that the present Weakness of human Nature consists in the Disorder and Incapacity of the Mind, as well as in the Irregularity and Turbulence of the animal Passions. These are Lusts of the Mind, as well as Lusts of the Flesh; *i.e*. the sensitive Part: Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Anger, Malice, Revenge, and the like. And, I am confident, that no Man can say with Truth, that he remembers a Time, when his Mind was free from any one of those devilish Lusts. Men may sooth and flatter themselves, as much as they please, and dress up human Nature, as fine as they can; but the Truth is, we are the Subjects of *diabolical*, as well as of *brutish Lusts*; and the former discover themselves to have taken Place in us, as soon as the latter.

The Author, from his own Account of the Inability of human Nature, grants, that *the Doctrine of divine Assistances may be admitted*. *

* *Page 272*.

With Respect to these heavenly Assistances, I would ask, whether they are afforded to every Man, as well to *Indians,* and barbarous People, as to those who are civilized, and nominally Christians? Whether any farther Knowledge of good, is conveyed to the human Mind, by those divine Aids, than Men of themselves are able to acquire? And, whether these Influences from Heaven, produce in Men, Faith, Hope, and Love to God, or not? If they do, then all Men, allowing that all are favored with those gracious Influences, must be the Subjects of those divine Principles, or heavenly Graces; and, consequently, they must be thought to perform Services acceptable to God. If they do not give Being to those gracious Habits in the Hearts of Men, then it necessarily follows, that Men who are destitute of Faith and Hope in, and Love to God, may please him, if these Aids are sufficient to enable them, to perform Duties in a Manner acceptable to the great Sovereign of Heaven and Earth, tho' those Graces are not wrought in their Souls. 1. It is certain, that all Men are not the Subjects of these spiritual Principles: *For all Men have not Faith*. That *Faith which purifieth the Heart*: {Acts. 15:9} Which *good Works* attend: And which *worketh by Love* {Galatians. 5:6}. 2. Without those Graces Men cannot serve *God acceptably*. *Without Faith it is impossible to please God*: {Hebrews. 11:6}. Without that Faith, *which is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen*. For that is the Faith, which the inspired Writer discourses of, in that Place. 3. Hence, it follows, that these supposed Aids, which Mr. *Foster* grants, are afforded to

Men, leave them under an Impossibility of Salvation; because they do not render them capable of acting Part, acceptable and pleasing to God. Either these Assistances bring Men out of the Flesh, into a State of Regeneracy, or they do not. If they do, then upon a Supposition, that they are afforded to all Men; we must conclude, that no Man *is in the Flesh*, or in an unregenerate State, that all Men, at one Time of other, are made *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. This we certainly know *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. This we certainly know is false. If these Influences do not bring Men out of the Flesh, into a regenerate State; then, unless those who *are in the Flesh, may please God,* and are *fit* for Heaven; notwithstanding these divine Aids, Men cannot please their Maker, nor obtain future Felicity. The Holy Scripture positively asserts, that such cannot please God, nor enter into his Kingdom {Romans. 8:9; John. 3:5}. And, I am resolutely determined to believe, what the sacred Scriptures affirm, let who will assert the contrary. When Mr. *Foster* observes, *that Men are commanded to* create in themselves a new Heart, be must refer to {Ezekiel. 18}. But the new Heart there meant, is no other than what was required of the People of *Israel,* in order to the peaceable Enjoyment of their civil and religious Privileges in the Land of *Canaan*: And not such a Heart as is necessary to the Fruition of eternal Life in Heaven, which is so plain a Matter, that it can scarcely escape the Observation of a common Reader, and therefore, it is nothing at all to his Purpose. And the Command given to the *Ephesians to awake*

from the dead, intends not, arising from a State of Death in Sin, for they were not in such a State; being already quickened by divine Grace; but from dead Frames, and dead Works, and dead Companions, which true Saints, are too apt to fall into, and to practice, and to converse with. This Text therefore, neither militates with our Opinion, nor supports the Authors.

This Writer objects very much to an Inference, which we draw from the Metaphor, *viz. That the new Birth is not gradual, but instantaneous like the natural. I would, in Candor,* says he, *suppose that the Meaning here is, that the first Principle of Spiritual Life, is communicated all at once.* *

* *Page 273.*

It is an Instance of Disingenuity in this Person, to suggest, that the least Degree of Candor is necessary, to suppose, that this is our Meaning, for it is what we always in as explicit a Manner as we can, declare is our Meaning. And we know, that the Nature of the Thing requires it. A Communication of a Principle of Life, must be instantaneous, it can't be gradual. The Growth of that new Life, is not instantaneous but gradual. This says Mr. *Foster, in Conjunction with some other Principles, has a very malignant and fatal Tendency. — For let a Man, a notorious Sinner,* (*as he will unavoidably if he adheres to this Scheme*) *fix on that, as the precise Time of*

his Conversion, when he is most strongly convicted of his Guilt and Misery, with Convulsions of Terror, and Agonies of Despair, and let him also believe, that the once regenerate, are of the Election of Grace, by the unfrustable Decree of the Almighty, and can never finally perish; *however his Regeneration may be dishonored and obscured, and all the Marks of it suppressed, by enormous and capital Vices*; *that he may notwithstanding, with St*. Paul, (*whom he supposes to represent his own Character*) be carnal and fold under Sin, and brought into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in his Members: *Let him, I say, confound and jumble all these Errors together in a Kind of Connection of religious Principles, and Conversion may be without Purity, Religion without Godliness, Christianity without Virtue*. — *Neither the Thunder of the Law, nor the Grace of the Gospel, may be capable of making Impression upon his Mind*; *but he may be ruined for ever confidently assured of his own Salvation*. *

** Page 273, 274*.

Mr. *Foster,* in this Paragraph, has put a most frightful Vizor on various Evangelical Truths; which hides their lovely Features, and charming Complexion, in order to excite Horror and Dread in the Minds of those, who shall look upon this terrible Mask, and not discover the beautiful Nature of the Truths, hid under this shocking Form, wherein he represents them. As the most agreeable Countenance in the World may be covered with a hideous Appearance, and lose

none of its Beauties thereby; so these divine Truths sustain no Loss at all, in their attractive and delightful Charms, by that horrible Dress wherein they are here represented. He has given a very mistaken Account of Conversion; he has misrepresented our Opinion of the Doctrine of Election; and drawn such Consequences from it, as are unnatural, and constantly denied by us; he has dreadfully misrepresented our Apprehensions of the Meaning of the Apostle *Paul,* in *Romans* 7: And infers such Conclusions, as he knew would effectually expose our Sentiments of Regeneration, Election, and of the final Happiness of Believers, to the highest Degree of Contempt, with the credulous and unwary Reader, who takes Things upon Trust from him. But these sacred Truths, will not, I am persuaded, be at all the less regarded, by any impartial and discerning Person, through the *disingenuous* and *unfair* Representation, which he hath given of them. A few Observations will fully vindicate these divine Principles from that Reproach here calf on them, and discover the *Unfairness* of the Author in endeavoring to raise the Indignation of all sober and virtuous Persons, against those Truths, which doubtless was his Intention, in this *romantic* Discourse.

1. We constantly maintain, that Regeneration is the Infusion of holy Principles, into the Hearts of Men; and that they in Consequence of such Principles being infused into them, are *greatly* concerned for their Sins; and on Account of the Impurity of their Nature; and *earnestly* desire to be holy in

all Manner of Conversation, as well as trust in Christ for Pardon, Peace, Acceptance with God, and the Fruition of eternal Life. *Convulsions of Terror, and Agonies of Despair,* we don't take to be Regeneration; for we know, that unregenerate Persons are sometimes the Subjects of such Convulsions and Agonies.

2. We always declare, that upon the Implantation of this divine Life in the Heart, an Abhorrence of Sin, and Indignation against it, and strong Desires to forsake it, and to have it eradicated out of the Mind, are produced and cherished.

3. We ever assert, that by Regeneration, a Person is disposed and determined, as God shall assist him, by his good Spirit, to deny himself, obey the Law, honor God, and glorify a Redeemer, whom he makes the Object of his entire Hope and Trust, for Holiness here, and complete Happiness hereafter.

4. We at all Times declare it, as our firm Opinion, that those who are chosen to eternal Salvation, are chosen to Holiness, or *the Sanctification of the Spirit,* and that, therefore, those who are not the Subjects of his sanctifying Operations, have no Foundation to believe, that they are Objects of the gracious Decree of Election.

5. It is false, that we conclude, upon the Safety and Salvation of those, who are guilty of *enormous* and *capital* Vices, without *true* and *thorough* Repentance for those Sins, and a

forsaking of them; and we suppose, that such *true* Penitents, in Mr. *Foster's* Opinion, will find Mercy with God.

6. We are persuaded, that the Apostle *Paul* in the 7 chap. of his Epistle to the *Romans* {Romans. 7}, represents his *own real* Character, *as a Christian*; but we deny, that he there treats of external Acts, either of Sin or Holiness. He only discourses of the inward Disposition and Acts of his Mind, as he found himself to be the Subject of a Law of Sin, and a Law of Holiness: Or of the unregenerate and the regenerate Part in his Soul; and of the contrary Actings of these opposite Principles within himself. We contend, that according to the unregenerate Part, he was *carnal and fold under Sin,* and that according to the regenerate Part, he was spiritual, holy, and free from Sin. — That the depraved Part never consented to Good, and that the spiritual Part never concurred in the sinful Motions of his Heart. Which Things are perfectly consistent with his holy Zeal, for the Honor of God, with his strict, humble, and spiritual Conversation, in the Church of God, and in the World.

7. And, therefore, not the least Countenance or Support is afforded to the *wretched* Conclusion, Mr. *Foster* draws from our Interpretation of that Place, in Connection with our Sentiments of Regeneration, Election, and the final Happiness of the Saints, *viz*. That *Conversion may be without Purity, Religion without Godliness, Christianity without Virtue*. As these are Consequences we deny, so they are foreign and contrary to the *genuine* Nature of the Principles

we embrace and maintain. If he was capable of proving, that we interpret that Place, in such a Manner, as it might be concluded, that we imagine a regenerate Person may *live in Sin,* be enslaved to Lust, and regardless of Piety and Holiness, he might infer as he does; but this is what he cannot do, I am confident, and therefore, his Conclusion, which was intended to bring an Odium on our Principles, justly exposes himself to Contempt; as a *most* unfair and prejudiced Opponent, determined to say any Thing, to the Disadvantage of Doctrines, which are unsuitable to his own Taste.

8. It is *most false,* that we so much as in the least Degree suggest, that Persons immoral and vicious, may be assured of Salvation; nor do our Principles at all suppose it. Holiness we firmly believe, and always assert it, as a most sacred Truth, is necessary to Happiness: And tho' we are persuaded, that the Apostle in the Place before-mentioned, speaks of himself, as a Christian, we deny, (and this Writer will never be able to prove it) that he there intends a Prevalence of Sin, over the Influence of Grace, in his Life. And, therefore, it was an *unrighteous* Thing in this *Gentleman,* to charge us with maintaining such horrid Sentiments. If he has no better Holiness, or greater Regard to Truth, than he has discovered in the Manner of his reasoning here; I am free to tell him it will never recommend him to God, nor good Men, nor fit him for a better World. After he has been thus *rudely* free, in charging us in the worst Manner he could; he tells his

Reader, that he *chooses not to insist on this Topic*. *
* *Page 275*.

Has he not said enough, to answer his *base* End with all credulous and unwary Readers, who take Things upon Trust? Could he express more than he has been pleased to say, to the Prejudice of the precious Truths of the Gospel? I think he could not. Perhaps he might have some Degree of Consciousness, that he had already said more than he was able to prove, and for that Reason finished this *romantic* Way of speaking. 'Tis strange, that some Men can't be Advocates for Holiness, and good Works, without falling into many evil Works; but that I have observed is true in several Instances. They have pleaded the Cause of Holiness, with *Lying*; and under the Influence of Pride, Envy, Malice, Revenge, and other base Lusts. After this Discourse of Regeneration, he proceeds to treat of Enthusiasm; and proposes to distinguish it from true Religion. *There is,* says he, *no Enthusiasm at all, in believing, that God maintains a Communication with the human Mind*; *and in a Way of calm Illumination, suited to its original Faculties, assists it in the Reformation of evil Habits, supports it under critical Emergencies*; *and co-operating with its own Endeavors, establishes good Resolutions, and facilitates its Practice in Virtue*. *

* *Page 281*.

I beg leave to ask, whether this Illumination is necessary to

enable us to understand what we ought to believe, and what we ought to practice, as Christians? If this is granted then it will undeniably follow, that the Mind of Man, cannot of itself acquire the Knowledge of Things necessary to be believed, and practiced: And if it cannot then the human the Mind must be impaired, and it is not in same State it once was. Again, Does this Illumination actually render us capable of understanding the Nature of heavenly Truths? Or does this enlightening Influence upon our Minds, really raise such Ideas of divine Things in us, as we could not form without it? If this is allowed, then I would ask, whether this Illumination takes Place in the Mind, at any particular determinate Time? Or whether it is always afforded to Men; and if there is no Point of Time, wherein they did not enjoy it? If it shall be said, that at some particular Time, this great and necessary Help, to enable Men to know and practice their Duty, is given to them; then we must conclude, that no Man could be regenerated before that Time; and therefore, according to the Principles and Reasoning of this Writer, Men's Deviations from the Rule of Right, must be *unavoidable and innocent*. If it is said, that this Illumination is constantly afforded, or that it hath always been enjoyed by Men; then they have ever had Ideas of heavenly Truths, and the Knowledge of their Duty, as Christians, which is certainly false.

But when, adds he, *particular Thoughts, Impulses, and inward Impressions, are directly ascribed to a divine Inspiration and Energy, then Enthusiasm commences*. *

* *Page 282,*

Answ. If the particular Thoughts intended, are concerning religious Principles and Duties; why may they not be ascribed to that Illumination of the Mind, the Author speaks of, without a Charge of Enthusiasm? Does this Illumination raise no particular Ideas of God and Religion in the Soul? If it doth not, what is the Use of it? Is this Illumination a Conveyance of Light to the Understanding of a Man, at some one particular Time? And always after that Moment, is a Man entirely left to himself, without God's maintaining any Communication with his Mind, to think, or not to think, of the divine Being, and religious Matters, just as he shall chuse? If it is so, then there is only one single Moment, wherein God condescends to assist his Creature Man, in Relation to the Knowledge and Practice of his Duty. Again, If the Impulses, and inward Impressions mentioned, are of a religious and holy Nature; to what Being must we ascribe them? Surely to God, who sanctifies our Hearts, and makes us *meet* for Heaven.

Mr. *Foster* farther says, *The Enthusiast is wrought up to a strong Imagination, that at certain Times he actually feels God within him*; *and by this Delusion, he is oftentimes hurried on to very false and dangerous Methods of Conduct*.
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* *Page 282, 283*.

I freely grant, that all Impulses and Impressions on the Minds of Men, by which they are misguided, or influenced to act an unbecoming Part, can never be from God; and that it is direct Enthusiasm to conceit, that they are from him. But, if a Man is excited to what is his Duty; if his Mind is, at certain Times, impressed with a deep Sense of the Importance of divine Things; if he is the Subject of great Sorrow for Sin; if his Mind is, in an extraordinary Manner, affected with the Grace and Favor of God, manifested in the kind Provision he has made for guilty Creatures; it is not Enthusiasm to ascribe these happy Effects, to a divine Influence upon him. For, that an heavenly Influence, which is productive of such good Effects in the Minds of Men, may be expected, and is really afforded to some, may be concluded from the Prayers of good Men, and of the Church of God. *David* prays, that God would *create in him a clean Heart,* and that he would re*new in him a right Spirit {*Psalms. 51:10}. And he petitions for quickening Grace: *Quicken me in thy Righteousness {*Psalms. 119:40}. And he begs for Illumination from God: *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law {*Psalms. 119:18}. He beseeches God, to afford him strengthening Aid and Support: *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe* {Psalms. 119:117}: The Church intreats, that her beloved would draw her: *Draw me, we will run after thee {*Song. 1:4}. And prays, that God would turn her: *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned {*Jeremiah. 31:18}. The Apostle prays for Illumination, in the Behalf of the *Ephesians*: *Making Mention of you in my Prayers, that the God of our*

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him; *the Eyes of your Understanding being enlightened* Ephesians. 1:17-18}. And he beseeches God, to *sanctify* the *Thessalonians* {1Thessalonians. 5:23}. These various Petitions, with Abundance more that might be mentioned, are clearly expressive of a divine Operation on the Mind, in order to furnish it with heavenly Knowledge, Grace and Holiness. Besides. God has promised to operate on the Hearts of his People. That, they *shall be willing in the Day of* Christ's *Power*. That he *will take away the stony Heart out of their Flesh, and give them an Heart of Flesh*. That he *will put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his Statutes, and keep his Judgments, and do them* {Ezekiel. 36:26-27}. These Promises are a proper Foundation, whereon we may found our Hopes of receiving such gracious Influences, that are productive of the holy and heavenly Effects, above-mentioned; and, therefore, it is not Enthusiasm to think, that such Influences are enjoyed by some: Nor is it so in any, who have Experience of the Being of those desirable Effects in themselves, to conclude, that they are happily favoured with those gracious Influences. Moreover, the Necessity of this divine Influence on Men, appears from the Representation given of human Nature, in the holy Scripture. We are said to be *without Strength*: All are so for whom Christ *died* {Romans. 5:6}. Our *carnal Mind is Enmity against God, it is not subject to his Law, neither, indeed, can it be* {Romans. 8:7}. We are under the *Dominion* of Sin {Romans. 6:14}.

Are under the *Power of Darkness*; yea, we are *Darkness* itself. It is true of all, who are in a regenerate State, that they had their *Conversation in Times past, in the Lusts of their Flesh, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh, and of the Mind and were by Nature, Children of Wrath, even as others* {Ephesians. 2:3}, They were Subjects of the Lusts of the Flesh, *i.e*. the sensitive Part, the Body; and also of the Lusts of the Mind, *i.e*. the superior, reasonable Part of Man. The Desires of the Mind, in Distinction from the Flesh, were evil and criminal. Unregenerate Men are the Subjects not only of *brutal,* but also of *devilish* Lusts. From hence, it may be justly concluded, that an heavenly Influence is absolutely necessary to enlighten, quicken, and sanctify Men; and if such a gracious Operation upon them, is needful to render them holy, in order to the Enjoyment of future Happiness; except we will maintain that the whole human Race are left of God, eternally to perish, we must grant, that such an Influence from above, is afforded to some, and, consequently, that those who are the subjects of this gracious Influence, are not guilty of Enthusiasm, in supposing that they enjoy or receive it. I add, Regeneration and Sanctification are constantly ascribed to God: *Who were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God* {John. 1:13}. *And you hath be quickened, who were dead in Trespasses and Sins* {Ephesians. 2:1}. *Hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling* {2Timothy. 1:9}. *We are the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works* {Ephesians. 2:10}.

I subjoin, in this Work, there is an Exertion of divine Power: *And what is the exceeding Greatness of his Power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty Power*; *which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead* {Ephesians. 1:19-20}. Since our Regeneration and Sanctification are wholly, and always attributed to God, and they are denied to be of Man: And since there is an Exertion of divine Power therein; it is not Enthusiasm in those, who are the happy subjects of Grace and Holiness, to entertain an Opinion of their receiving divine Impulses and Impressions; let some Men say what they please. Once more; God has promised, and the Saints have had delightful Experience of Consolation and Joy, upon a Sense of Sin, and of their Sinfulness, and in Temptations, Afflictions, and Trials, for the Gospel's Sake. God is willing that the *Heirs of Promise, should have strong Consolation, who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope before them* {Hebrews. 6:17-18}. And he hath given to the Saints, *everlasting Consolation and good Hope thro' Grace* {2Thessalonians. 2:16}. They *joy in God, thro' the Lord Jesus Christ* {Romans. 5:11}. And *glory in Tribulation. — The Love of God being shed abroad in their Hearts* {Romans. 5:3-5}. *Their Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* {1John. 1:3}. *They walk in the Light of his Countenance* {Psalms. 89:15}. They are the happy Subjects *of the Joy of his Salvation, and are upheld by his free Spirit* {Psalms. 51:12}. God gives to them *the Oil of Joy for Mourning, and the Garments of Praise for*

the Spirit of Heaviness {Isaiah. 61:3}. These various Modes of Expression, afford a solid Foundation to conclude, that God graciously condescends to communicate to his People, Comfort under their spiritual Distresses, and that he gives to them lively Hopes of an Interest in his Grace and Favour: And that it is his Intention to raise them to an exalted State of Blessedness. And, therefore, it is not Enthusiasm in them, to conceive that they receive benign Influences from him. Their heavenly Raptures are not the *airy* Flights of a warm Imagination; but *solid* and *substantial* Joys, produced in their Minds, by a supernatural Operation on them.

Should it be objected, by this *Gentleman,* or any other Person, that this divine Operation which is productive of those Effects, is incomprehensible; or that it cannot be explained: I would answer, no more can the Impulses, and inward Impressions, and the Illumination, which he allows of, be explained. If God, at any Time, and upon emergent Occasions, maintains a Communication with the human Mind, that Communication is to us, as to the Mode of it, entirely inexplicable; but such a Communication cannot be denied, without we will assert, that Men in no Circumstances of Distress and Difficulty, receive Assistances from Heaven, to comfort, relieve and direct them, in the true Way to Happiness. To affirm which, would enervate all, that the holy Scriptures have said, concerning the heavenly Aids afforded to Men, in the most distressed and disconsolate Condition. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that such an Influence upon

the human Mind, may be. For it is not in the least repugnant to Reason, to conceive that the Father of Spirits, can operate on the Spirits he created. Nor is it an unreasonable supposition, that the human Mind is capable of being thus wrought upon, in order to furnish its Understanding with better Light, and its Will with a better Disposition, than, in a corrupt State, the Mind of Man is the Subject of, in these and other Powers of it. And, I would observe, that this Influence is easily to be distinguished from Enthusiasm, by the Effects it produces.

Those Effects, are a Sense of the vile Nature of Sin, and a deep Sorrow for having sinned, and on Account of its Being, and various Workings in the Heart. An Hatred of it, and a holy Indignation against it as Sin so that no Lust, whatever, is connived at, nor cherished. And this Influence produces Desires to praise and glorify God, for the amazing Goodness, he has discovered in providing for the Welfare of Sinners, who have demerited his awful Displeasure by their criminal Behavior. It also fills the Soul with an humble spiritual Joy, arising from a Sense of that good Will, Grace and Mercy, which the *God of all Grace,* shows, exercises, and discovers towards all those who trust, in him, thro' the Mediation of Christ. If any are pleased to ridicule these Effects, and pronounce them *enthusiastic,* it is not only because they are unhappy Strangers to the Power, which attends *real* Christianity, and *true* Piety; but because they are under the

Influence of strong Prejudices and Prepossessions against revealed Truth.

We may now observe what real Enthusiasm is. And,

1. To imagine, that God reveals any Truths to the Minds of Men, which are not contained in his Word, is Enthusiasm. For no Addition is now to be expected to that Revelation, which we are favored with; nor is it necessary; that is sufficient of itself.

2. It is Enthusiasm to conceive, that he reveals Truths relating to Salvation, immediately, to the Minds of Men, without his Word; or otherwise than by Means of that. Revelation contains all Truths necessary to be believed in order to Happiness. And that is sufficient, as a Rule to guide us, in forming all our religious Sentiments. Hence it follows, that an immediate Revelation of Truths, thereto contained, to the Understanding of Men is not wanted; and therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, that an immediate Revelation is not given to any Person whatever. Farther, should any Man pretend to such a Revelation, what Evidence could he be capable of giving, that he is infallibly guided in forming of his Ideas of Truth, which he pretends is made known to him in this extraordinary Manner? None at all.

3. A Persuasion, that we are excited by a divine Impulse to act, what does not appear by the holy Scripture, it is our Duty

to do, is downright Enthusiasm whatever Pretenses we may make of enjoying Comfort in it, and receiving Advantage from it. To imagine, that Impulses and Impressions to act besides the Rule of our Practice, in religious Matters, are owing to a divine Influence upon us, is Enthusiasm, doubtless.

4. To conceit, that we are divinely influenced, when we are troubled and oppressed in our Spirits, and we know not well, on what Account it is, or what is the particular moving Cause of our Distress, is Enthusiasm of a melancholy Kind. For God never makes Impressions on the Minds of Men, but to answer some important and wise Design; no such Design can be answered, by throwing Men into Distress, without some Cause of that Distress appearing to their View. And, therefore, to speak of Terror, and Trouble of Soul, without any Mention of the Occasion and Spring of that Trouble, is a most un-instructive Way of speaking, and it can never be of the least real Use to Christians.

5. An Apprehension, that we are under a divine Influence, because we are full of Joy, and a Confidence of being happy, when we know not the Foundation and Spring of that Elevation of Mind, is Enthusiasm. For, God in administering Consolation to the Souls of Men, always presents to their View some solid Foundation of Comfort; without that, our Comfort would be groundless, and have nothing to support it; and of Course, it must in that Case, be worth nothing. It is

Enthusiasm, unless the holy Scripture an its Promises, or scriptural Truths, are the Source from which our Pleasure arises. And, therefore, when Persons express Abundance of Joy and Comfort, which, as they say, they receive from God, and acquaint us not with the Cause from which their pretended spiritual Joys arise; they might as well say not a Word; for all they express relating to those Joys, can never be of the least Benefit to any. Nor can it justly entitle them, to an Interest in our Opinion of their excelling, in Religion and Piety. If it doth not raise Jealousies an our Minds, of their pretending to what they have not really experienced. 6. No Impulses, which confound Reason, and throw Persons into Agitations, can reasonably be supposed, to have God for their Author. He operates effectually upon Men, whenever he is graciously pleased to work on them by his powerful Grace; but his Influences never interrupt the due Exercise of their rational Faculties; on the contrary, they always direct them to act in the best Manner, and to the wisest Purpose. Nor do his sweet Influences raise Convulsions, in the human Frame, and cause Distortions in the Members of our Bodies. His Operations, tho' they are ever efficacious, they are never violent, but always gentle, and put no Force upon Nature, nor cause Men to act, as if they were in a Ferment. For any to conceit, that they are divinely inspired, because they feel unaccountable and unnatural Motions, and because they are strongly excited to disorderly Actions, and which may justly be accounted *wild* and *frantic,* Delusion and Madness, or it is Enthusiasm of the most evident Kind. By these Marks,

Enthusiasm may easily be distinguished from that divine Work upon the Hearts of Men; which Mr. *Foster's* Text plainly asserts: *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*: *So is every one that is born of the Spirit* {John. 3:8}.

It may not be improper to acquaint the Reader briefly, with the general and genuine Sense of the Words: 'Tis this: The Influences of the holy Spirit upon the Souls of Men, are compared to Wind: And as that is not under the Direction and Control of any Creature, so the divine Spirit works upon whom, at what Time, and in what Manner he pleaseth, and none can obstruct his Operations, or disappoint him of his End in working. As the Wind is to us invisible thro' its Tenuity, tho' we perceive its Being by the Motion, and Sounds, and Effects of it: As we cannot particularly and fully describe how it is produced, nor tell where that wait Body of Air sinks, when it subsides: So we are not able to explain the Manner of the holy Spirit's Influence upon us, tho' we are sensible of its Effects. We know, that the new Creature exists, by its Actings, tho' we cannot declare the Manner of its Production.

This *Gentleman* very frequently objects, not only in this Discourse; but also in various other Parts of his Writings, that we extort unnatural Inferences from scriptural Metaphors, and particularly from that used in these Words.

But he may be pleased to observe, that without the Use of this or other metaphorical Representations, which are given in the Word of God, concerning this momentous Point, our Opinion may be established: For what we collect from those Representations, is clearly and fully expressed in plain Language. Faith is expressly said to be the *Gift of God* {Ephesians. 2:8}. And, therefore, it is not acquired. Repentance is *the Gift* of an exalted Saviour: And, consequently, Men do not effect it in themselves. The Grace of *Hope* is *given of God,* as well as *everlasting Consolation is* {2Thessalonians. 2:16}. And, therefore, Men raise not this heavenly Hope in themselves. It is declared, that *God reconciles* us, who were Enemies to him, and disobedient to his Law: And, consequently, our submissive Disposition to his holy Will, is not of ourselves. It is *strongly* suggested, that we make not ourselves, to *differ* from others, and that we have *nothing,* as Christians, but what we have *received* {1Corinthians. 4:7}. And of Course, we must conclude, that it is not of our own Will, that we become holy, humble, and spiritual; but we ought to ascribe it *wholly* to God, and his gracious Influence upon us. It is *explicitely* denied, that those, who are born again, are *born of the Will of the Flesh, and of the Will of Man*: And it is asserted, that *they are born of God* {John. 1:13}. The *necessary* Conclusion from which is, that Regeneration is not of the Will and Endeavor of Man, but that it is w*holly* and *solely* the Produce of a divine Operation upon us. These are plain Texts, and not figurative Expressions, wherein the whole of what we contend for, is

plainly affirmed; and therefore, our Opinion is not only built on Metaphors, and figurative Modes of Speech, but it is expressed in the plainest Language; which fully defends us, in interpreting Scripture-Metaphors relating to this Subject, in the Manner we do; notwithstanding this *Gentleman's* Exceptions to our Interpretation of such Metaphors.

CHAPTER NINE GOD NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

TO have Respect of Persons, Mr. *Foster* rightly observes, is generally taken in a *judicial* Sense. When, Therefore, it is said, that *God is no Respecter of Persons*; the Meaning is, that he proceeds in Judgment, according to the strictest Rules of Equity and Justice. Justice and Goodness are not inconsistent: If they were so, he that is just could not be good; or so far as Justice is exercised, Goodness could not exercise itself. Again, if Justice and Goodness are contrary, God cannot be essentially just and good, for contrary Perfections cannot reside in him. Nay, if they are contrary, they cannot both be Perfections; because it is impossible that any Perfection can have its contrary. If therefore, it is equitable and just to punish guilty Creatures, the Infliction of Punishment, cannot be contrary to divine Goodness. It will soon be evident, that it is not in the least inconsistent with the Goodness of God, to punish Transgressors, so far as their Guilt demerits Penalty. If he should exceed in punishing, the

Desert of Sin, he would act contrary both to Justice and Goodness; but this he will not, this he cannot do; because he is essentially just, and essentially good: And he can never do a Thing that is contrary to any of his infinite Perfections. That it is perfectly consistent with divine Justice and Goodness to punish guilty Creatures, the following Considerations, I apprehend, will fully evince.

I. God created Man perfect, and, therefore, it was not a tyrannical and oppressive Act, to give him a perfect Law, and require him to keep that Law strictly and punctually, in all the Parts of it. God, doubtless, had a right to expect, and demand his Creature, Man, to exert all those Powers, with which he endowed him, to his Honor; and if God had such a Right, then, seeing his Powers were complete and perfect, it was no Act of Tyranny and Oppression, to subject him to a perfect Law, and require his Obedience to it. That God made Man uptight, Reason suggests, and Revelation assures us. And, therefore, it was just and righteous to insist upon his perfectly obeying a perfect Law.

II. A Breach of that perfect Law, which was given to Man, in his innocent State, according to Equity and Justice, certainly demerited Punishment: Unless we may suppose, that the Creature may offend against God, without losing a Title to his Favor; but that is so absurd, that Reason forbids the Thought. And, consequently, it was not an Instance of Tyranny and Oppression, to threaten Man with Penalty, if he

violated that Law, and actually to inflict it, upon his Failure of Obedience to the Law. If any shall say, that Sin doth not demerit Pain and Misery, according to Equity and Justice, they must necessarily maintain, that Man might commit Evil, with Impunity, and without Danger of becoming obnoxious to the awful Displeasure of his Maker. The Absurdity of which is so very evident, that I imagine, none will care expressly to assert it; how much soever they may be determined to advance, and contend for Principles, which can never be supported without that is allowed to be true.

III. Man's Inability fully to obey a perfect Law, is *only,* and the certain Consequence of Sin, on his Part. God did not deprive him of a Power, perfectly to love, adore, and serve him; but the present Incapacity of Men, to love, reverence and obey God, as they ought to do, is the *sole* Effect of Sin on the Part of Man; which I should think, no Person can doubt of; because it is not only agreeable to Reason, so to conclude; but the contrary Supposition, is evidently repugnant to Reason, and subverts all natural Religion. And, therefore, every Man, who is not able to keep the perfect Law of God, must have come under an Imputation of Guilt, prior to his becoming incapable of yielding an absolutely perfect and unerring Obedience to that perfect Law. And, by Consequence, since it is confessed, that no Man is capable of performing such an exact and perfect Obedience, as the holy Law of God requires; it is certain, that every Individual of the human Race, is chargeable with Sin; and was so,

previous to his Incapacity of yielding a perfect Obedience to the divine Law.

IV. It is irrational to think, that Justice requires any Abatement to be made in the Rule of our Duty, since we have disable ourselves to practice it, exactly; by acting a criminal Part. If, indeed, God had rendered human Nature impotent, and unable to keep his perfect Law, it would have been unreasonable, still to insist upon a perfect, and unerring Obedience from Man; because the Rule of Duty prescribed to a Creature; in Equity, it cannot exceed the Ability, which the Lawgiver furnishes the Creature with: But as our present Impotence and Corruption follow upon Offense, on our Part; it is no Act of Tyranny and Oppression in God, our righteous Judge, still to require of us a sinless Obedience to his Law; and he may condemn, and righteously punish us for the Want of that Obedience notwithstanding, some Men of *bold* Spirits, can dare to pronounce this *cruel,* and *ungenerous,* and *insulting*. I am fully sensible, that this Reasoning will be objected to, upon our Opinion, concerning the Way, wherein human Nature became originally guilty: But I think myself, under no Obligation to defend it, in this Place; because if we are mistaken in that Point, it is, I apprehend, impossible, that we should be mistaken, as to the Grounds and Principles, upon which I here reason, *viz*. That Man was created perfect, and that every Individual of Mankind is legally guilty, or is under a righteous Charge of Sin, before he becomes the Subject of moral Impotence and Weakness. For it is certain,

if any Thing is certain, that Man was formed with perfect Powers; and it is equally so, that no Man without becoming legally guilty, would ever be the Subject of the least Degree of moral Impotence. Show me the Person, who may justly be defended from all Charge of Sin, and I am sure, that I shall have in my View, a Man free from all moral Weakness, Defect:, and Disorder. I am confident, that human Nature, without Guilt, would never have been the Subject of any moral Defect and Impurity: That without the Commission and Imputation of Sin by the Law, no Creature would ever become imperfect and sinful. And, therefore, this Reasoning will stand, let Men become guilty in what Way soever; since they only can become imperfect, in Consequence of becoming guilty, some Way or other, in the Sight of God.

From these Things we must be convinced, that the Principle is false, upon which Mr. *Foster* argues, and infers all his Conclusions from, relating to this Subject. It is this: That *there is one invariable. Rule of Judgment with Relation to all, suited to the Difference of their Conditions and Characters*: *And this is the eternal moral Law, and their acting conformably to the Light and Advantages, which they severally enjoy*. *

* Vol. 3 of Sermons, page 13, 14.

The moral Law is perfect, and allows of no moral Defect; if, therefore, Men in their present Circumstances were required to keep that Law strictly and punctually in all the Parts of it, in order to receiving future Rewards, and escaping Condemnation and Death, no Man could be happy hereafter: This the *Gentleman* is forced to grant; for which Reason, he lays it down, as a necessary Principle, that God will accept Men in Judgment, and reward them for their Obedience, if they act conformably to that *Degree* of Light, and *those* Advantages which they severally enjoy; tho' their Obedience is very far from being such, as that holy arm perfect Law requires. If this Point is not clearly proved, then he reasons without any Principle at all, and, consequently, his Conclusions must be drawn at random, or without any Foundation to support them. If he demonstrates the Truth of this Principle, then he will prove, that the Characters of *guilty* and *righteous* agree to the same Persons, upon the very same Foundation, *i.e.* their own Behavior. This he will maintain, when he shall prove, that flat Contradictions are true. Again, he must evince, that God is able to approve of moral Imperfection. Farther, that the holy God might have made Man imperfect: That Justice directs to this Method of excusing Crimes, and rewarding a Creature for an incomplete Obedience: For if this is not proved, it will unavoidably follow, that God, may in Equity, charge on Men their Offenses, and refuse to reward them for their imperfect Services. If this is equitable, then, our Sovereign Judge may determine to condemn Men for the want of a perfect

Obedience to his perfect Law, or pardon and save them, just as seems good to him. And that it is not agreeable to Equity to punish an offending guilty Creature, will never be proved, though the Creature cannot perfectly obey the Law; because no Creature becomes incapable of yielding a complete Obedience, without the Commission, and a Charge of Sin on his Part, as I have before observed. Since the Principle is false, on which the Author reasons and infers, his Reasoning has no Force, nor are his Inferences just. He, is pleased to assert, that *God is partial and acts contrary to Truth and Equity, if he is inaccessible by some of his Creatures, and element and propitious to others, in like Circumstances*. *

* Page 14.

Answ. Men are either *innocent* or *guilty*. If they are guiltless, it is contrary to Justice to condemn and punish them: But if they are *no-cent* and chargeable with Sin, or moral Defects and Impurity, it is an Act of Justice to inflict Penalty on them: And it is *Insolence* in any sinful Creature to suggest it is not. Equity in the Infliction of Punishment, relates to the desert of the Person on whom it is inflicted, and to nothing else. If a Man that is undeserving of Punishment, is punished, it is not just and equitable; but if a Man's Conduct renders him worthy of Punishment, it is just and equitable to punish him, even though another equally deserving of Punishment is pardoned. The Man who suffers Penalty, is proceeded towards as Justice directs: The Person whose Offense is

pardoned is treated merely on the Foot of unmerited Favor, and Clemency. And that Clemency which is shown towards him, that is forgiven, destroys not the Equity of the Procedure towards the Person punished. And it is a *senseless irrational* Thought, to imagine it does. Hence, we must conclude, that God is just in punishing his offending Creatures; though he is pleased to pardon and save, and render happy others, who are equally guilty, with those he punishes. The former are proceeded towards, as Justice directs, in relation to their personal Desert: The latter are acted towards, not according to their Demerit; but merely on the Foundation of undeserved Favor and Clemency. Farther, Mr. *Foster* concludes, from *a Possibility of discovering the Being and time of the Perfections of God, from his Works of Creation, upon the Possibility of Men's recommending themselves, to his Favor by their personal Actions*. *

* Page 14.

The former of these, the Apostle *Paul* discourses of, in {Acts. 14:15-16,17} and {Acts. 17:22-23,24-25,26-27}. But of the latter he delivers nothing. That the Eternity, Self-Existence, infinite Power and Wisdom of God, may be known by his Works is certain: *For the invisible Things of him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things, that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead {*Romans 1:20}. But, that Reason is capable of discovering in what Way God will save, and

render guilty Man happy, hath not yet been proved, nor ever will be. What Force of Reasoning is there, in this Argumentation? God hath given sufficient Evidence of his Being and Perfections, in the surprising Works of Creation, and Man is able to discern that Evidence? — And it may with Certainty be concluded upon, from our natural Notions of his Justice and Goodness, that he will reward his innocent Creatures; and, therefore, guilty sinful Creatures may secure an Interest in his Favor, and justly expect Happiness from him on the Foundation of their own Acts of Obedience? None at all; no, not the least. What? because we know, that God is pleased with perfect Holiness, may we reasonably conclude, that he can approve of imperfect Virtue? With more Reason we might be assured, that a curious Artist, who views with Pleasure, a finished Piece of Work, which he with much Study and Labour hath wrought, may behold it with the same Delight, when some rude Hand has quite marr'd and spoil'd it. What? because it is possible for Men to acquire some Knowledge of God and Virtue, by the Exercise of their rational Faculties, upon the Works of Creation, is it to be concluded, that they are capable of acquiring such a Degree of Divine Knowledge, and of practicing so much Virtue, as will interest them in the Approbation of God? If Men have any Acquaintance with the Being and perfections of their Creator, and any Sense of Virtue, and in any Measure practice it, must they necessarily be accepted with him, their righteous Judge? Surely these are Conclusions drawn at

Random; or Inferences, which are not drawn from any solid and established Principle.

What if a Man should happen to be brought off of the Practice of the *most stupid* Idolatry, and of some *sordid* Lusts, by and just easy Reasoning, must he become the Object of the Delight of HIM, who *is of purer Eyes, than to behold Iniquity?* What? If a Man has any Religion at all, must he unavoidably be justified by his Maker, and rewarded with future Felicity; because he has emerged out of a wretched Sink of abominable Idolatry, and left the Practice of the *most sottish* Lusts? How shall these Things be proved? And if they are not proved, Mr. *Foster's* Reasoning will not stand for any Thing at all; but proved, they never can be. He, also infers, that as Men will be rewarded hereafter on Account of their personal Actions: So the *Reward they shall receive will be proportionable to their Abilities and Improvement*. And, that, therefore, *the virtuous Heathen, who exceeds Christians in Virtue, will be more amply rewarded, as his Advantages were fewer and his Improvement greater*. *

* Page 18, 19.

Whether he thinks, that *Socrates* will wear a brighter Crown in Heaven, than he expects to be adorned with, who, after his Discourse of the Divine Unity, and the Immortality of the Soul, died like a *Fool,* I will not pretend to say. He

apprehends, that this Principle is maintained by the Parable of the Talents, which our Saviour delivers, and thinks, that the *Heathen* is intended, by him, that received one Talent only. *

* Ibid. {Matthew 25:15}.

But he is greatly mistaken. For he that had the one Talent, knew who was to judge him, which the *Heathen* does not: He is ignorant, that Christ will be the Judge of the *quick* and *dead*. Again, the Persons, who received the Talents are called the Servants of the Lord, *i.e*. Christ: *Heathens* cannot be so called, for they have not heard of him, and as they cannot believe in him, of whom they have not heard, neither can they be denominated his Servants, Besides, the Talents are the same specifically; but the Knowledge of the *Heathen* and that of the profess'd *Christian* differs specifically; and therefore, the *Heathen* cannot be designed by him, who received the one Talent. Farther, these Talents intend not Grace, which is a Meetness for Heaven, in *Christians,* for that is an active Principle, it is not hid in the Earth, it appears in the Life, and brings forth Fruit to the Glory of God, and can never be lost or taken away. Once more, these Talents design Gifts, which are sometimes bestowed on Persons, who are not regenerate, and, consequently, will not be saved. These Gifts are used to the Honor of Christ by those, who are sanctified through his Grace now, and shall be happy hereafter; but those, who perish, use them not as they ought.

Lastly, Christ will do his faithful Servants Honor, in the future Judgment, by openly declaring their Faithfulness in serving him; but the Reward of eternal Life, they will receive on another Foundation, than their own Services, *viz.* the Grace of God, and the precious Blood, and the everlasting Righteousness or perfect Obedience of him, who is their *dear,* and *only,* and *glorious* Redeemer.

The Uses, which Mr. *Foster* observes, the Doctrine he has advanced suggests to us are there. — *That we,* as Sinners, for so he must mean, *Can reverence God without Terror*. *

* Page 19.

Though we are conscious of having sinned against God, in many Instances, we have no Cause to be afraid of his Anger, for since we certainly know, that he will be propitious and clement to some Criminals, if he is not so to us, we may boldly charge him with Partiality, and acting contrary to Equity. — *It removes all such Opinions concerning the arbitrary Capriciousness of his Rigor and Government, as render him the Object of a superstitious Dread and Aversion*. *

* Ibid.

It causes us not to be afraid of his righteous Judgment, though we have violated his holy Law. We can take the

Courage to appear before his awful Tribunal, to be tryed and judged by him, notwithstanding, we are sensible, that he might justly pour out the Vials of his Wrath and Indignation upon us, for our numerous Defects and Miscarriages. — *It influences us to think of the State of Men universally with Pleasure*. *

* Ibid.

That is to say, it is highly agreeable to us, to think, that Men may transgress the Law of their Maker, without bringing Destruction and Misery upon themselves thereby. — On the contrary, a Supposition, that God will not reward (guilty) Men with eternal Felicity, on the Foundation of their personal Actions, will cause us to survey the World, w*ith a Pity mixed with Horror*. *

* Page 20

As we shall exercise Pity towards our Fellow- Creatures, who have ruined themselves by Sin, we shall think it an horrible Thing, that our Sovereign and righteous Judge, has constituted and appointed, in his Law, that Death and Misery shall be the *Wages of Iniquity*. And, by this *Gentleman,* we must be censured, as *ungenerous* and *ill-natured,* if we can persuade ourselves to imagine, that God will not suffer Men to sin against him with Impunity. But his Censures, I assure him, we nothing value, being influenced by infinitely higher

Consideration, *viz*. the Righteousness and just Judgment of God our supreme Judge, who we know will *by no Means clear the guilty*; without a proper Provision for the Honor of his Law, and supporting the Rights of his Justice, in doing it. These Uses are naturally inferred from the Doctrine Mr. *Foster* maintains, and they are truly worthy of it. With all intelligent and serious Persons, I doubt not, but those Uses, so justly and naturally drawn from the Principle asserted, they will be sufficient to convince them, that it is certainly false, and necessarily attended with dangerous Consequences.

CHAPTER TEN GOD A SOVEREIGN BEING

MR. Foster being disposed to discourse of divine Sovereignty, for that Purpose, he made Choice of these, Words: *Nay, but O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? {*Romans 9:20}. In his Sermon, he advances such Principles, and militates against them, as no Man, I am persuaded, will ever plead for, and argues in a most impertinent, weak, and inconclusive Manner. According to the Method he proposed to take in treating on his Subject, he first points out some Things, to which the Words. Of his Text cannot, be applied, or which cannot rightly be referred from them.

1. He says, *we ought not to infer* from the Text, that God is a *despotic arbitrary Sovereign, whose Will is the only Rule of his Actions*. *

* Vol. 1 of Sermons, Edit. 3, Page 104.

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Pray, Sir, who says he is? None that I know of. The Rectitude and Righteousness of his Nature, determines his Will to fix on what is just and righteous: This, I think, is allowed by all, who conceive of him, as a Being who is essentially just and righteous. And, if any can imagine that he is not, they are impious Wretches, not worth contending with: *Righteous is the Lord in all his Ways, and holy is he in all his Works* {Psalms. 145:17}. He is necessarily so, by Reason of the Holiness of his Nature. No Man sure supposes, *that God may resolve to deceive, to vex and torment his innocent Creatures*: *

* Page 105.

Tho' this Writer is pleased to suggest, that some imagine he may; for that is contrary to his eternal Veracity. *Nor to vex and torment them*: Because his infinite Goodness will always incline him to accept of and reward Innocence. Neither do any, that I know of, *suppose, that God acts without Reason, merely from Humor and arbitrary Pleasure*. *

* Ibid.

And, therefore, all the ill Consequences, which he draws from that Supposition, affect the Sentiments of no Mortal living. He makes a *hideous* Outcry against an Opinion, which no body embraces, with no other Design, than to impose upon his Hearers and Readers, and make them think, that he seriously reasons, when he egregiously trifles, and solemnly delivers the greatest Impertinence, which could possibly be expressed.

2. *It can't be inferred from the Text,* says he, *that Men are not to enquire into the Reason of God's Proceedings*; *or that they are in no Cases, able to judge of the Justice of the Methods of his Providence*. *

* Page 107.

This as true and modestly expressed; but the *Gentleman* quickly exceeds the just Bounds of Modesty, and reasons in the most wild and impertinent Manner, and even contradicts himself. He proceeds in his Discourse thus, *God would not have us believe implicitely, that any Thing is just, because he acts it, but only requires of us to approve of it so far as we can reconcile it to the general Rules of Equity and Justice*.

* Page 107, 108.

This is a bold Assertion, and far exceeds the Modesty with

which he began. 'Tis afterwards corrected and contradicted, when he says, *indeed there may be Difficulties, to such imperfect short-sighted Creatures as we are, in judging of particular Actings of Providence, for Want of understanding the entire Scheme that the great Governor of the World is pursuing*. *

* Page 110.

In all such Instances, we are doubtless obliged to believe, that what God does is equitable and just, because the *Judge of all the Earth,* cannot but do the Thing that is *right*; and, consequently, in some Cases, we are obliged to believe the Justice and Equity of the divine Conduct, whereto we cannot because of our Imperfection and narrow View of Things, discern that Righteousness and Justice, which we are sure all the Dispensations of Providence are directed by. He charges us with *dishonoring the infinite Wisdom of God, by discarding and abandoning our Reason*. *

* Page 108.

This Charge is false, for we do not discard and abandon our Reason: We attend to its Dictates, and follow its Direction in all Matters, wherein, and so far as, it is able to guide us. But we are confident, that it is not *the Rule, by which we must ultimately be conducted in all our religious Enquiries*. Reason is to judge of the Truth of Revelation, and of the

Sense of the Language of the Bible; but it is that, and not Reason, by which we must ultimately he conducted in forming our Sentiments on various religious Subjects therein contained, because they are beyond the Verge of Reason. If Men will deny this, they must deny, that Revelation gives us a Discovery of any Truths, which Reason of itself could not bring to Light. Again he says, *that we are over modest, when we represent it* (Reason) *as blind and erroneous in Cases of the highest Importance*. *

* Ibid.

There seems to be no Danger of this *Gentleman's* imitating any in an Excess of Modesty, he is not likely to be guilty of that. Are we too modest in thinking, that our Reason is impaired; that it is not in the same Case it once was? If this is an Excess of Modesty, let us without blushing assert its Perfection: And, that human Nature is as capable as ever it was, of discerning that Compass of Truth, the great Creator designed it to an Acquaintance with. Let us not be ashamed to maintain the true Dignity of our Nature, and the real Strength and Clearness of our intellectual Faculties. But if this may justly be esteemed Presumption and Arrogance; then, on the contrary, let us confess the Imperfection of our Knowledge, and own our Incapacity to acquire an Acquaintance with Truths, necessary to be known and believed in order to our Happiness. And et, we cannot be guilty of so manifest an Absurdity, as *to represent our*

Reason, as knowing no more, and having no more distinct and proper Ideas of the moral Perfections of the supreme Governor, than the Brutes that are void of Understanding; *

* Ibid.

which this Author without the least Regard either to Truth or Modesty, is pleased to say we do. We know, that it is one Thing to affirm, that our Reason is impaired, and another to assert that we have no Reason or Understanding at all. I do not remember to have read any Author, that coined so many foolish and absurd Notions, and imputed them to others to render them ridiculous, and to make his Readers believe, that he had gained a Conquest, when in Fact, he had no Opponent, as Mr. *Foster* has invented and palm'd upon us. *If we suppose,* says he, *that God can punish his Creatures for what they cannot help, and yet be clear of the Charge of Injustice, we confound and destroy the necessary Distinction between Good and Evil*. *

* Page 110.

I apprehend, he means, if we suppose, that God can punish his Creatures for not doing the whole of their Duty, when they are incapable of it. *Answ*. If their Incapacity was owing to God, and not to themselves, his Conclusion would be just; but since human Weakness is the Consequence of a criminal Behavior in Man, it is not so. And, therefore, the ridiculous

Inferences he draws from hence, tho' they may be pleating to himself, as I suppose, all the Impertinence is, with which his Writings abound, on such like Subjects, they are not more absurd, than they are unnatural and foreign to the Truth we contend for, *viz*. That it is just with God to punish his Creatures for their Imperfection in Obedience, when they cannot perfectly obey his Law; because their Want of Power to yield a perfect Obedience, is owing to Sin on their Part. Would any Mortal besides Mr. *Foster* infer from hence, that we *can have no Probability what Kind of Behavior is likely to be pleasing to God, or what Scheme of Religion is most worthy of him. That we cannot be sure, that the best of Men will not be the Objects of his Displeasure, and the worst his peculiar Favorites*. *

* Ibid.

Is this Reasoning? 'Tis mere *Rant* and *ridiculous* Caviling. He takes Notice of a Phrase, which is commonly used, *viz*. *That the End which God designs in all his Actions, in the Creation, and providential Government of the World, is his own Glory*; and allows, *that the Expression itself is capable of a just and rational Sense*; but complains of its having been *misapplied, and made to signify something distinct from, and even inconsistent with, the Exercise of Justice and Goodness, viz. that every Thing is right, merely because God wills it, and has Power to effect it*. *

* Page 112.

I am persuaded, that no Man ever asserted this, or said any Thing like it. *Again it is made,* says he, *to signify, that God is strict and rigorous in punishing, and that his Glory is most displayed, when he is most that his stiff and inexorable, when he hath most of stern, and inflexible Severity, and least of Mercy*. *

* Page113.

Answ. God is just in punishing his Creatures for Sin; and as his guilty Creatures are undeserving of Mercy, he may without any Reflection on his Goodness refuse to pardon their Sins, to save and render them happy. He adds, *but if we believe him to be necessarily wise, righteous, and good*; *it ,will then be his chief Glory to exercise an equal and impartial, but at the same Time a gracious Care over all his* (guilty) *Creatures, and invariably to pursue the fittest Measures, to promote the general Good* (*of Criminals*). *

* Page 113.

So this *Gentleman* means, or else he says nothing at all to the Purpose. These are bold Things for one to express, who has, tho' but in a single Instance, sinned against God. What? Shall a Sinner take it upon him, to charge the Almighty with a Want of Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness, if he doth

not provide for, and invariably pursue Measures to promote his Happiness? This is matchless Presumption and Arrogance! With infinitely less Indecency, a Traitor might take the Liberty to tell his lawful Sovereign, against whom he has rebell'd, that he will neither be wise, nor righteous, nor good, if he discontinues his Favours to him, and punishes him for his Rebellion. It is most false, that *the Glory of God is not a distinct Consideration, from the Exercise of his moral Perfections for the Happiness of his* (*guilty*) *Creatures*: *

* Page 114.

Which Mr. *Foster* must intend, for he is not speaking of Innocents. Nor is God *a compassionate Father to all* (*sinful*) *intelligent Beings*. *

* Ibid.

He is not such to Devils, neither is he such to impenitent Sinners of the human Race. He doth not; nor do Righteousness and Justice require him to act towards them in that Character. God is at full Liberty to act towards them in the awful Characters of a righteous Lawgiver and Judge; and he may determine to execute Judgment, Wrath, and Indignation upon them for Sin, and his so doing is perfectly consistent with his Goodness. For divine Justice and divine Goodness are not inconsistent. If Justice was contrary to

Goodness, both could not reside in God; he must then either not be just, or not good; whereas he is essentially just, and essentially good. Mr. *Foster* goes on, and mentions some Cases, to which, if they could happen, the Words of his Text, would be no proper Reply. *If we could suppose,* says he, *that God had absolutely determined the final and eternal Misery of great Numbers of his rational Creatures*. *

* Page 115

If by an absolute Determination, he means a Purpose to punish, without Respect had to Sin, as the Cause of the Infliction of Punishment, he makes a Supposition of what none have said, at least, that I know of. But if he intends a Decree to execute Vengeance on some for Sin; 'till he is able to prove, that it is contrary to divine Equity and Goodness, to punish Criminals, he will not be capable of proving, that it is inconsistent with either, in God, to resolve upon the Infliction of Penalty for Sin. But perhaps he thinks, that eternal Punishment for Sin, cannot be reconciled with Justice and Equity; since he frequently speaks with Dislike of representing God, as a *relentless* and *inexorable* Judge. If he designs this; the Consideration of two Things, will fully evince the Justice of it. One is, the great Demerit of Sin, as it is committed against God, who is an infinite Being. And the other is, the suffering Creature for Sin, will still continue sinful, and to transgress; and, therefore, endless Punishment is just and equitable. Another Supposition is *God's tempting,*

and exciting his Creatures to Sin. *

* Page 115

Neither will any Person, who has the least Sense of the divine Purity, or the evil Nature of Sin, and of Justice and Righteousness, ever imagine this. Farther, says he, *if we could suppose, that God enjoins impracticable Duties, and punishes any for not believing, or not doing Impossibilities*. *

* Ibid.

Answ. That was once possible to Man, which is not so now, *viz*. perfect Obedience. Men's Inability to obey the Law perfectly, is the Consequence of Sin in Man; and, therefore, it is just, frill to require sinless Obedience of him: For Equity obliges not to abate of Duty, because the Creature has disabled itself, for the right and exact Performance of it, by Rebellion against God. If by Impossibilities, he designs incomprehensible Things, it is irrational to suppose, that we are not obliged to believe many such Things, *viz*. The eternal necessary Existence of God. — The Creation of all Things out of nothing, *etc*. These are Truths of natural Religion, and yet Mr. *Foster,* I dare affirm, can no more comprehend them, than he is able to grasp the Earth, span the Heavens, or measure boundless Space. But it may be, he does not mean, Things incomprehensible; seeing, impossible and incomprehensible are not synonymous Terms. That which is

impossible, cannot be; but we certainly know, that *that* which is incomprehensible, is; and, therefore, we are bound to believe it, and except we will contradict our Reason, we must believe it. If he really designs by Impossibilities, Things which cannot be, let him tell us, who is so irrational, as to suppose, that we are obliged to believe those impossible Things. One would think, that the *Gentleman* was contending with very Fools, by his Manner of arguing; but that it is usual with him to dispute after this Sort. It is such an impertinent Way of Reasoning, that I am surprised a Man of Sense could be guilty of it. He next proceeds to give us his Sense of the general Design of the Apostle in this Chapter {Romans 9}; which with the *Socinians* and *Arminians,* he takes to be this: That *God determined to confer extraordinary Favors upon the* Jews, *as a Nation. — That no Respect is had to the eternal State of any* particular Man, or Number of Men. *

* Page 120.

This is a most false and corrupt Interpretation of the Discourse of the divine Writer, which will evidently appear by the Consideration of the Context, and the Manner of the Apostle's Reasoning in the Place.

1. He asserts, in the next preceding Chapter a divine Purpose to call, and save some particular Persons: Or a gracious Purpose in God, to make some of the human Race conformable to the *Image of his Son., i.e.* holy, and,

consequently, happy. That these Persons he did *predestinate, call, justify, and glorify*. — And firmly concludes upon their Security, and certain Happiness, from that Interest they have in the inseparable Love of God in Christ, notwithstanding the Hardships, Difficulties, and Sufferings, to which they might be exposed in this World {Romans. 8:30,36,37,38}. And the inspired Writer obviates an Objection, that some might be disposed to raise against the Doctrine of the Election of particular Persons, and their Safety in Consequence of such a Decree concerning them, from the Rejection of the Jews, to whom God had expressed many great and precious Promises, and whose Privileges, as a Nation, were very numerous and eminent. The Method which he takes to defend that Doctrine from all just Objection, is exceeding clear, and necessarily must be convincing to every one, that gives proper Attention to it.

He observes, that all the *Israelites,* and the Posterity of *Abraham,* were not of the Number of the *Israel* God intended to save, and which he asserts shall be saved: For the Proof of this Point, he notes, that of the Descendants of *Isaac,* and not of *Ishmael, Abraham's* Seed were called. And, that this Decree of Election took place in the Line of *Jacob,* and not in that of *Esau*, which most evidently proves, that all the natural Descendants of *Abraham,* were not included in his spiritual Seed; to whom the spiritual Promises made to him belong. But, tho' these Things demonstrate the divine Sovereignty, in dispensing spiritual Blessings; they do not

amount to a full Proof, of the main and particular Point, which the Apostle had in View, *viz*. That all the *Israelites* by Birth, and who enjoyed the external Privileges he had mentioned, were not the Objects of this Decree of Election to eternal Life, and therefore, after he has vindicated this divine, sovereign Purpose, from some Objections, which *bold* Spirits might dare to advance against it; he adds two Things which come up to a full and undeniable Proof of the Matter. One is the calling and Salvation of the Gentiles. And the other is, that but a *Remnant,* a small Number of the *Israelites,* were included in the spiritual Seed, and therefore, eternal Salvation was not inseparably connected with the Enjoyment of those external Privileges, which God, in his Providence, was pleased to confer upon them, as a Nation; and, consequently, it is an Objection of no Force, to say, that since that People are rejected, who enjoyed those Privileges, Election cannot be immutable: Or that the Salvation of those who are supposed to be the Objects of that gracious Decree, is not certain and infallible; because the People to whom the Promises were once made, are now cast off, and neglected by God: For not all, but some of that People *only,* were designed to Salvation; and others who are not of that Race, are called by divine Grace and eternally saved. And, therefore, *God hath not cast off his People, whom be foreknew*; nor shall any miss of Salvation and Happiness, whom he predestinated unto Life, whether they are *Jews or Gentiles,* the spiritual *Israel* includes some of both. Thus the Apostle clearly demonstrates, that the divine Purpose of Election is

unfrustable, and the certain Salvation of all the chosen, and defends that Doctrine from all Manner of Objections, which Men might be disposed to raise against it. Mr. *Foster* asserts, *that what is said concerning* Jacob *and* Esau *relates not to them personally considered*. And assigns some Reasons for the Proof of his Assertion; 1. *That it is not true personally, but only in a national Sense,* that the Elder did serve the younger. *

* Page 119.

Answ. This Subjection of the elder to the younger, suppose or includes in it, that the Elder and his Descendants were not Heirs of the spiritual Promises, or that they were not the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*: If not, the Authority to which the Apostle appeals, is impertinently alleged, and concludes nothing at all to his Purpose; but this we may by no Means think, and therefore, it was true of *Esau* personally, as well as of his Posterity, that he was not an Heir of spiritual Blessings, which the spiritual Seed of *Abraham* were. 2. Says he, *the Text in* Genesis, *proves unquestionably, that this was the only Thing intended in the Promise*. *

* Ibid.

Answ. Pray, Sir, why are you so confident, that the Apostle reasons in an inconclusive Manner, and offers impertinent Proof to confirm his Doctrine? This is what you very

frequently do; but the Apostle never did. To deny, that the holy Writer, discourses of a right to spiritual Blessings, in this Place, is as ridiculous as it would be to deny, that it is Light, when the Sun is in his Meridian Glory. Again, why did you not, Sir, cite the whole of the Text in *Genesis?* You were pleased to omit citing, *two manner of People, shall be separated from thy Bowels, i.e.* one Heirs of spiritual Benefits, and the other not. One the spiritual Seed of *Abraham,* and the other not. Besides, it is true of *Jacob* personally, that he was of that spiritual Seed, and it is true of *Esau* personally, that he was not, or else, we must conclude, that the Apostle like you, Sir, reasons in a most weak and inconclusive manner. *And finally,* says our Author, *that noted Passage,* Jacob *have I loved, but* Esau *have I hated, speaks only of the Distinction which God, in his Providence, made between the Race of* Jacob *and* Esau, *with Respect to outward and temporal Advantages*. *

* Page 120.

If so, then, the Apostle did not produce that Passage suitably to his Purpose, for it is undeniable, that he discourses on the spiritual Seed of *Abraham,* and of their Right to spiritual and eternal Blessings, which are Fruits of divine Goodness and Grace, as certainly as Punishment is the just Consequence of Sin, and of the righteous Hatred of God against it. Several Things may be observed, which will abundantly confirm this Matter. The Apostle's great Concern for his Kinsmen

according to the Flesh, which arose not from the Consideration of their Loss of outward and temporal Advantages *only*; but from the Consideration of their Rejection from a Participation in spiritual Blessings. Again, the Wrath of God, intends his just Displeasure against Sin, and the Destruction which is mentioned, is Sinners suffering Punishment, in Consequence of their Guilt.

And the Riches of God's Glory, design that abundant Grace, which is illustriously displayed, in the Ordination of the *Vessels of Mercy* to Salvation and Happiness, in fitting them for, and in preserving them to the Enjoyment of the heavenly State. Farther, the *Gentiles* by the Gospel are put into the Possession, not of *mere* outward and external Advantages, but of spiritual and eternal Blessings; they therefore, are the Blessings whereof the divine Writer discourses in this Place. Moreover, those, who are counted for the Seed, are saved, and those, who are not counted for the Seed are not saved, according to the Reasoning of the Apostle here, and, consequently, we must conclude, that he speaks of the different States of Men in the next World, and not of their various Circumstances in this. But none suppose, that God *absolutely* determines upon the Misery of any Man hereafter, or without Respect had to Sin, as the procuring Cause of Punishment, which Mr. *Foster,* either ignorantly or unrighteously suggests, that some do suppose. Having answered this *Gentleman's* false Reasoning on this solemn and important Subject of divine Sovereignty, I would now

advance some Propositions relating to that momentous Doctrine.

Proposit. 1. God hath a natural and sovereign Power over all the Creatures, he has formed: And he might, if such was his Pleasure, deprive them all of Existence. Their being at all, was wholly owing to his sovereign Will, and the Continuance of their Being, entirely rests on his absolute Pleasure; he, therefore, has a Right as Lord of every Thing, to destroy or suffer to drop into nothing all the Works of his Hand. The intelligent Creature's eternal Existence results from the divine Will, that it shall always be. Obedience to the Law gives no more Right to endless Being, than Disobedience does. Eternal Happiness according to the Law arises from Obedience, and everlasting Misery springs from Disobedience; but it is no more proper to say, that Obedience entitles to an Eternity of Being, than it would be to affirm, that Sin gives the Creature a Right to everlasting Existence, though the eternal Being of the Creature, is necessarily supposed, in its perpetual and endless Happiness or Misery. The Eternity of the Existence of the rational Creature, is merely the result of the Sovereign Will of the great Creator, its being for ever happy or miserable, according to the Law, follows upon Obedience or Disobedience.

Prop. 2. God hath a Right, if he pleases to exercise it, to deprive an innocent Creature of any Advantages and Gifts, which are not essential to the moral Perfection of its Nature; those indeed, which are so, the great Creator cannot take

away, without a Reflection on his own infinite Purity and Rectitude. But those that are not essential to the moral Perfection of an intelligent Creature, God, without the least Violation of Right, or Prejudice to his Justice, or Reflection on his Holiness, might take away from an innocent Creature, and be clear of all Cause of just Complaint. For he is not a Debtor to his innocent Creatures, any farther than his free Promise makes him so.

Prop. 3. In Case a Creature sins he has not only a Right to punish for the Offence; but the Rectitude and Righteousness of his Nature, will necessarily, though freely, determine him to inflict Punishment, which is the Demerit of the Crime perpetrated.

Prop. 4. As the Dominion and Right of God and of Man differ, that which would be unjust in Man, is not so in God. For Instance, God has an absolute Dominion over the Lives and Properties of Men, and therefore, he may command one Man to take away the Life or Property of another, in which Case, it will be the Duty of a Man to do either or both these Actions, which on any other Foundation than this would be highly Criminal. To take away the Life of any Man who has not forfeited it, is Murder, without a divine Command; and to take another's Property, is Theft, without express Warrant from Heaven for it. But upon the Authority of a divine Command, neither Act is unlawful.

Prop. 5. God has a Right to punish sin, in the Person of the Sinner, or in another, in his Read, just as he pleases. Because, though Justice indispensably requires the Punishment of Sin;

it does not so require, that the Person sinning shall suffer the Penalty, which Sin demerits; if it did no Sinner could be saved. Again, God may will and decree, that an innocent Creature shall bear the Guilt of others, and sustain the Punishment it deserves, in order to Satisfaction for it, and the Pardon of it to the Transgressors, with the Consent of that innocent Creature, and a suitable Reward for so eminent a Submission to his Will, and in order to a full Vindication of his Justice in the Salvation of Sinners. The Reasons of it are these: God has an absolute Power over every innocent Creature. And that innocent Creature, it is also supposed, has Power over his own Life, and may dispose of it to that important End. And that he voluntarily so does, or suffers Punishment with his free and full Consent; and is amply rewarded for it. Neither of these Things can possibly have Place among Men, and therefore, Justice in God, and Justice in Men is not exactly the same. Some Conclusions evidently follow form these Things, which are of considerable Importance. 1. God may ordain some guilty Creatures to eternal Salvation, and decree to punish others for their Sins, just as it seems good to him. 2. He may provide a Saviour for some, and suffer others to peril, since all deserve to die and perish. 3. He may pardon some, by transferring their Guilt from them to another and punishing of it in him, in order to the Satisfaction of his holy Law and of his Justice: And he may inflict the Penalty on others personally, which their Offences have rendered them worthy of. 4. He may regenerate some, make them meet for Heaven, and preserve

them safely to the Enjoyment of it, and leave others in a State of Unregeneracy. 5. God may receive some to his immediate glorious Presence, and banish others from himself, on Account of their Crimes. In saving the Objects of his Love, he does no Injury to them that perish, and in their Misery he is strictly just, for he imputes not Sin to them, of which they have not been guilty, nor subjects them to a Curse that is underserved, nor deprives them of a State of Happiness to which they can pretend that they have the least Right, nor inflicts upon them greater Pain and Misery, than their sinful Actions deserve. To the rived, God is sovereignly gracious; and to the damned, he is perfectly just and equal; for their Punishment will not, in the least Degree, exceed the Demerit of their Crimes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN OF JUSTIFICATION

MR. *Foster* very frequently speaks of the dangerous Consequences, which attend representing Reason and Religion, as inconsistent. Who they are that so do, I profess, I know not, nor is he able, I am persuaded, to point out to us, any, that are guilty of maintaining such an Absurdity. However, we are not of that Number, he may allure himself. For my Part, I am so far from thinking, that there is any Repugnancy between Reason and Religion, that it is my firm Opinion, without Reason, there can be no Religion at all; but at the same Time, I must take leave to say, that there is more in Religion, than Reason can comprehend. I am for attending

to Reason, in this Article of justification, before God; and doubt not, but Reason itself, if it may be heard, will convince us of the utter Impossibility, of guilty Creatures, as such, being accepted with him. The Light of Nature is sufficient to acquaint us, in some Degree with our Misery; though it is insufficient to direct us, how we may be interested in divine Approbation, and obtain Happiness. In order to clear up this weighty Point, I beg leave to advance the following Propositions, and I desire they may be well considered and examined.

Proposition 1. God is infinitely wise, and holy, and powerful in his Nature.

Prop. 2. All his Works are, and necessarily must be perfect in their Kind.

Prop. 3. Man, who is the chief of the lower Creation, was certainly created perfect, or absolutely free from any Defect and Disorder, in his Constitution, *viz.* without any ill Temperament of Body, and evil Habits and Dispositions, in his superior Part, the Mind. For God, who is an infinitely wise, and holy, and powerful Agent, cannot be the Author of any imperfect Work. The Perfections of his Nature, will not allow us to conceive, that the least Defect or Blemish can attend the Operations of his Hand. That his Work is perfect, is the clear Voice of Reason, as well as of Revelation. And, consequently, human Nature, in its original State, must have been wholly free from moral Defects and Imperfection.

Prop. 4. Man, in his primitive State, was under an indispensable Obligation, to exert, to the utmost, all his perfect Powers, in loving, fearing, and obeying his Creator.

Prop. 5. God would never require more of his Creature Man, than he was furnished with a Power to do, as he was created by him.

Prop. 6. Human Nature is actually become depraved and corrupt. This is allowed on all Hands. We, who contend, that Men cannot be justified, by their own Works, confess and bewail the tad Corruption of our Nature: And, those, who maintain, that Sincerity is accepted of God, in the room of sinless Perfection; are obliged to grant, that human Nature, is now attended with such Weakness and Imperfections, as render a perfect and universal Obedience impossible to Mankind. The Truth, therefore, of this Proposition, is not doubted of, even by our Opponents, in the momentous Point of Justification; how much soever they may be inclined to lessen and extenuate our present Depravity. As it is sufficient to my Purpose now, to allow, that we are all corrupt and imperfect, I shall not, here, debate that Matter with them.

Prop. 7. A perfect Law can never be obeyed, in all Things, and in a complete Manner, by an imperfect Creature.

Prop. 8. God, our righteous Lawgiver and Judge, would never suffer Man to loose his Power of keeping a perfect Law, without the Commission of Sin on his Part.

Prop. 9. The infinitely pure Majesty of Heaven, can never approve of Imperfection. If he can, then, 1. He may command it. Whatever God approves, he may will and

require of his Creatures; for that which God approves of, cannot be contrary to his Nature; and that which is not contrary to his pure and holy Nature, he may will and command. And, consequently, if imperfect Virtue, can be approved of God, he may will and command it. But if moral Defect and Impurity is opposite to the infinitely pure Nature of God, as it most certainly is, then he cannot approve of, accept, nor require it. 2. If God can approve and accept of imperfect Holiness, then, imperfect Creatures, remaining such, may have Admittance into Heaven; except, God cannot receive those to his glorious Presence, of whom he approves, which, I think, if it should ever be asserted, it will never be proved. 3. If God can approve of and justify imperfect Creatures, as such, then, they may not only be received to Heaven with their Imperfections; but may eternally remain imperfect. 4. Upon this Principle, I am of Opinion, that it cannot be demonstrated that Man was ever perfect, or that the Angels above are so. For it seems to me nothing unreasonable, to suppose, that an intelligent Creature, may have always been, and that he may eternally continue to be, such as God can approve of and justify.

Prop. 10. And, therefore, God cannot approve, accept of, or justify an imperfect Creature, as such. Two Things clearly evince the Truth of this Proposition.

1. Such as, God cannot, by Reason of the Holiness and Perfection of his own Nature, make a reasonable Creature, he cannot approve of and justify as such. Now, God could not

create Man with evil Inclinations and imperfect Powers, and for the very same Reason, that he could not form Man with vicious Habits and defective Powers, he cannot justify him, as he is become the Subject of depraved and corrupt Principles. Such as Men are, when accepted of God, such he might make Man, and by Consequence, if God approves of Men, as imperfect, he might create Man attended with Vice and Imperfection. The latter is shockingly absurd, and the former is no less so.

2. If an intelligent Creature is such in himself as God approves, accepts of, and justifies, there can be no Necessity of that Creature, ever being other than he is, It is sufficient to any Creature to be the Subject of such Qualities, as recommend him to the Favor, and interest him in the Approbation of the infinitely best of Beings: Nor need any desire to become the Subjects of higher and more refined Virtue, than such, as their Sovereign Judge will accept of and justify them, on Account of; if therefore, imperfect Virtue is accepted with God, there is no Necessity of perfect Holiness, nor is there any Reason to be offered, why Men should be in the least concerned, that they are not perfectly holy and innocent. Hence, we see the fatal Tendency of the Doctrine of Justification by Works. That Opinion, is warmly contended for, under a Pretense, of Zeal for Holiness; but it leads us unavoidably to the moll monstrous and absurd Conclusions, *viz*. That, God may be pleased with Imperfection. — That, he might make Man imperfect. — And, that Men have no Occasion to regret, that they are not

sinless and innocent. And, therefore, I cannot but pronounce, that Opinion irrational, absurd, and unfriendly to Holiness and perfect Virtue, which is alone acceptable to God, and is the true Glory of an intelligent Creature.

Prop. 11. Man's Incapacity to keep a perfect Law is wholly owing to Sin, on his Part, God is no Cause of it. 1. God created Man perfect in Holiness, or, with sufficient Ability to obey the whole Law, which he stood obliged to observe. 2. God did not deprive Man of that Power, nor suffer him to loose it; but upon Offense on his Part. I think each of these Particulars is so evident, that the Reason of every Man, will oblige him, to assent to their Certainty and Truth. And, therefore, we must necessarily conclude upon the Truth of these Things; (1.) That God is not obliged on his Part, to make such Abatements, in his Precepts, as the present corrupt and depraved State of Mankind requires, in order to Men's Observance of them, and obtaining Justification and Life, by their own Works. No divine Perfection dictates to this Method; so far from it, that this would be an Act inconsistent with the Righteousness and Purity of the Nature of God. (2.) Nor is the divine Lawgiver under Obligation, to re-furnish Man, with a Power, which he criminally lost. (3.) Neither is it any Act of Cruelty in God, still to require of Men and condemn them for the want of it, a perfect Obedience to his perfect Law.

I am sensible, that it is often affirmed by some with great Confidence, that God cannot require his Creatures to do,

what is beyond their Power. This is certainly true, if Respect was herein had to the Creature, as created by God; but that is not the Case, for they intend Man in his apostate and corrupt State; and, therefore, when they urge, that it is contrary to divine Goodness, to punish Men for not doing what is impossible, (as Mr. *Foster* frequently does) they are guilty of the most evidently false Reasoning and greatest Impertinence; unless, they really mean, that if God doth not make Abatements, in his Demands of Obedience, proportionable to that Inability to obey him, Men by Vice, become the Subjects of. If this is what they intend, then, by how much the more, Men are enslaved to Lusts, by how much the more strong evil Habits are in them, by so much the less God requires them to be virtuous, and will accept of and justify them on Account of their Endeavors, how defective and imperfect soever they are. — Then, God sinks in commanding Holiness of his Creatures, as they grow more profligate and wicked, and are under the Influence of evil Habits, strongly and deeply rooted in the Mind. If they design this, then, let them never more pretend, that they reject the Opinion of Justification, by the Righteousness of another, out of a concern for personal Holiness and inherent Rectitude. For that Opinion is not attended with any Consequence, in the least prejudicial to Holiness, which theirs most evidently is. If what they mean is, that God commands not that, which Man never had a Power to do, they have no Opponent, except in their Imaginations, and they have full Liberty to display their Rhetoric on this Head,

and may do it, without offending, or injuring of any Man, or Principle of ours.

They will never be able to prove, that it is inconsistent with the Goodness of God, to command that of his Creature Man, which he has lost a Power to do, in Consequence of a Criminal Behavior, let them wrangle, and dispute, as long as they please. They may as soon prove, that a Master is cruel, to be angry with a Servant, for not doing the Business of the Day, allotted him to do, because he rendered himself incapable of performing it, by his Intemperance; as prove, that it is any Instance of Cruelty in the divine Being, to require Man, to obey his pure and perfect Law, because, he has rendered himself incapable of it, by Sin. They may as soon prove, that a Lord is unjust, who demands his own of his Steward, and punishes him, for not paying it; when he hath it not, because, he has spent it in Luxury and Extravagance. God furnished Man with a Power to keep his Law, that Power he did not take from Man; (none sure will say he did) but Man became enfeebled, by Sin against his Maker, and therefore, his present Inability is no Excuse for his defective Obedience. I know, that this Reasoning will be objected to, upon our Opinion of the Way, wherein human Nature became depraved; but there is no Necessity to defend it, in this Place, because Reason, if it can inform us of any Thing at all, with Relation to these Matters, will most assuredly inform us, that Man could not lose, that God would never suffer him to lose, that Power to keep the Law, without

Guilt on his Part. And, consequently, this Reasoning can never be answered, let Men become guilty or chargeable with Sin, in what Way soever: In the Way we apprehend, or in any other Way imaginable. Upon the whole, I can't but apprehend, that if Men were not influenced, by a Principle of Self-Love and Tenderness for themselves. — That if they were not under strong Prejudices in their own Favor. — That if they were not too ready to conclude upon the Truth of what they wish was true, without any reasonable and solid Ground. — That if they were not backward of admitting that for Truth, which they dread should appear to be Truth, I say, I cannot but apprehend, that Reason itself, would guide them, in some Measure, into the Knowledge of their miserable Condition, and compel them to grant, that they have brought certain and inevitable Destruction upon themselves, if God their righteous Judge, should please, as he undoubtedly may, to proceed towards them according to the Nature and Demerit of their imperfect and defective Obedience, to his pure and holy Law. For it is certainly reasonable, to conclude, that God made Man upright. That no Defect, or Blemish attended human Nature, in its original State. — It is against all Reason and Sense, to imagine, that human Nature is now perfectly holy, and free from moral Impurity. It is absurd in the highest Degree, to conceit, that Man became the Subject of evil Habits and Inclinations, without any Offense committed against God, by him. — And it is unreasonable to suppose, that Man becomes free from Obligation to Duty and Obedience, by Disobedience and Sin

on his Part. — It is repugnant to Reason itself, to think, that imperfect Virtue, and Obedience stained with Guilt, as Man's is, can be approved of God and recommend him to his Favor. — It is highly irrational to apprehend, that God can justify Man, when and as he is such, as he could not create him, by Reason of his own infinite Rectitude and Purity. It is therefore, reasonable to conclude, that the State of human Nature is miserable and remediless, if Men are really to be tried and judged according to the Demerit of their Actions.

Mr. *Foster,* in treating about the Doctrine of Justification, made Choice of a Text, which it has been apprehended, establishes the important Truth of free Justification, without any Works of our own. And gives such a Sense of it, as is quite inconsistent with that glorious Truth. Whether he has acted the Part of *a Workman, that needeth not to he ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth,* will soon appear, by an Impartial Consideration of his Discourse upon it. His Text is contained in {*Romans* 10:3}. *For they being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God*. This *Gentleman,* in the Explication of the Words, it might be expected, would have shewn, what Righteousness of God, the Jews were ignorant of, which occasioned their Non-submission to his Righteousness, differently, to be understood. But this he hath not attempted. The Righteousness of God, sometimes designs the Justice, Rectitude, and infinite Holiness of his Nature: So it is to be

taken, in these Words, *to declare his Righteousness, — to declare, I say, at this Time his Righteousness, that he might be just, etc*. *i.e*. that his Righteousness and Justice, might appear in the Justification of a Sinner. Again, it intends, *that* Righteousness by which sinful Men are justified: In that Sense, it must be understood, in this Scripture; *but now the Righteousness of God without a Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*: *Even the Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no Difference* {Romans. 3:21-22}.

That hereby a Righteousness for Justification, is intended, the whole Scope of the Place undeniably proves: For, that is the Subject of the Apostle's Discourse in the Context, before and after these Words, and therefore, we must necessarily understand a justifying Righteousness by it. The grand Question, with Relation to this Point, is this: What that Righteousness is, which the Law and the Prophets give Testimony of, whereby Men are justified in the Sight of God, and which the Jews refused a Submission unto, in order to form a true Judgment concerning this Matter, which hath been the Subject of much Debate, it will be very proper, to consider well, what the Apostle himself delivers, on this momentous Doctrine of Justification, in his Epistle to the *Romans,* and in his Epistle to the *Galatians*.

1. The Apostle affirms, that *this Righteousness is without a Law,* he doth not say without the Law του νομου with the Article; but νομου only, without the Article. It is therefore, without *any* Law perfect or imperfect. And he asserts, that there is *no Law given, which can give Life*; and *that Righteousness, i.e.* for Justification, *is not by a Law*. The inspired Writer fully proves, that *all* Men have *sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*. — That all are guilty in his Sight, and obnoxious to his Displeasure, and from thence, he infers this Conclusion, that *by the Deeds of a Law, shall no Flesh living be justified,* which Conclusion he confirms thus; *for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin* {Romans. 3:19-20}. A Law therefore, whereby we may know that we are defective in our Obedience, — by which we may be convinced, that we have sinned, can never justify us, unless our Obedience is such, as the Law requires; in which Case it cannot accuse of Offense. Now if it is impossible to be justified by a Law, which charges Sin upon, and convinces Men of Sin, then, if such a Law is not given of God, which Men may be said to have fully and perfectly obeyed, they must be convinced of Sin by it; and, consequently, their Justification in his Sight, cannot possibly be by that Law. If such a Law is given, by the Observation of which, Men may be justified; then they cannot be convicted of any Transgression by that Law; and, of Consequence, a justified Person must be thought not to have offended, he must necessarily be reputed innocent and sinless. If Men are accounted Sinners, they must have violated some Law, for where *no Law is, there is no*

Transgression. And if the Reasoning of the Apostle is of Force, Justification cannot be by any Law, from which the Knowledge of having sinned is derived. Now there is no Law, by, or according to which, Man can be esteemed innocent, and therefore, Justification cannot be by a Law.

2. The Apostle denies that Justification is of *the Deeds of a Law*, — that it is of Works, *viz*. of our personal Obedience to a Law. To say, that it is of imperfect Works, that Men are justified in the Sight of God, is not to interpret, but to contradict the Apostle. He says, that Righteousness *without Works,* is imputed, in order to Justification: Some are pleased to contradict him, and say, that those Works of Righteousness, which Men perform, are imputed to them, or accepted, as their justifying Righteousness. *All* Righteousness consists of Works conformable to a righteous Law. If, therefore, in the Justification of Men, any Righteousness is imputed to them, that Righteousness must be either their own personal Obedience to the Law, or the Obedience of another: If it is their personal Obedience that is imputed to them, it can never be said, with the least Appearance of Truth, that Righteousness without Works, is imputed to them; but if the Obedience of another is reckoned, it may truly be said, that *that* Righteousness imputed to them, is without Works, *viz*. any personal Works of theirs, which is the only Sense, wherein the Apostle with the least Propriety can be understood, when he says, that Righteousness *without Works is imputed* in our Justification {Romans. 4:6}.

3. In our Acceptance with God, Boasting must not have any Place. The Apostle constantly teaches, that *that* is wholly excluded, and observes, that it is not by a Law of Works. If Works are the Matter of our Acceptance with God, and the Cause of our receiving divine Benefits, then we have Ground and Foundation for Boasting. Not as if our Obedience had such intrinsic Value in it, as to merit the Reward. Perfect Obedience hath not such Worth attending it: For there is no Proportion between the sinless Obedience of a perfect Creature, and the Happiness communicated to Men, which is intended by the Reward. But the Reward would then be of Debt, that is to say, we might claim it, as our Due, upon the Foot of Right, having performed the Conditions on which the Reward is promised. This is what the Apostle designs by *Boasting*, and which he affirms is *excluded,* not by *a Law of Works, but by the Law of Faith* {Romans. 3:27}. The *Socinians* and *Arminians* understand a Law which doth not prescribe or require perfect Works, as Conditions of Acceptance and Justification. To which I answer. (1.) The *Jews* were not of Opinion, that perfect Obedience is required to Justification; and therefore, if the Apostle excludes perfect Works only from Justification, there was no proper Foundation of Controversy between him and them. (2.) The Apostle speaks of Works, without distinguishing them into perfect and imperfect, and, therefore, this Distinction of Works, with Relation to the great Doctrine of Justification, is a mere human Invention. It cannot be supported by the Language and Reasoning of the divine Writer. (3.) Such

Obedience as that Law requires of us, which is the Rule of our Behavior, is necessary to our Justification by it: That Obedience is our Duty, and nothing more; if, therefore, imperfect Works only, are required of us in order to our Acceptance with God; perfect Works are not our Duty, or we are not required to practice perfect Holiness; and if we are not obliged by the Law to perfect Works, then imperfect Works are the whole of our Duty; and we cannot be accounted Offenders, we have done what is our Duty to do, and, consequently, there is no Place for Remission, because Pardon necessarily supposes Sin, either in a Defect of performing Duty, or in acting contrary to it: And if there is no Place for Remission, Boasting cannot be excluded.

Farther, if the Law, which is the Rule of our Conduct, requires an imperfect Obedience only, in order to Justification, I should be glad to know, what Degrees of Imperfection it allows of, what Sins, and what Number of Sins may consist with Justification by it. Whether, if a Man should happen to be guilty, thro' any violent Temptation, of *Dissimulation* and *Lying,* of *Adultery* and *Murder,* of *Vanity* and *Pride,* of *murmuring against God,* and *telling him to his Face, that he does well to be angry with his Dispensations, even unto Death, of swearing and cursing with a Denial of Christ,* or *of Incest*: I say, I should he glad to know, whether these and such like Enormities may consist with Justification by our own Works, according to this Law, whether, it allows of such Imperfections; (I bless God, not with the least Desire

to practice them, but) because I have a great Veneration for the Memory of some Persons, who were guilty of these Vices, and should be exceeding sorry, to have it prov'd, that they were not accepted with God, or justified in his Sight. If the Law requires no other Obedience in order to Justification, than what may consist with such Actions, it is easy to prove, that these Actions are not Sins: For the Law requires no more as Duty, than it requires to Acceptance by it; except a Man may be accepted and justified for what he does, tho' he does not his Duty; and if a Man may be accepted by his own Works, who does not his Duty, no Danger attends the Violation of the Law, because the Law enjoys that as Duty, which it will dispense with the Omission of, in the Business of Justification. 'Tis just the same, as to Acceptance with God, if a Man fails in the Performance of his Duty, or punctually performs it. The Man who is imperfect in his Obedience is approved and rewarded for his Services, and if another Man could perfectly perform his Duty, it is impossible, that he should enjoy any superior Advantages.

4. We cannot be justified by our Obedience to any Law, according to which we are rightly deemed Transgressors. The Reason is very evident; if we fulfill not a Law, which is the Rule of our Conversation, we are Sinners, and must be so accounted according to that Law; and if on Account of a partial Obedience only to the Law, we really are, and must be reputed Offenders; we cannot be accounted righteous by or according to that Law, unless the Law requires one Kind of Righteousness as Duty, and accepts of another in our

Justification, which it is absurd to imagine; for the Lawgiver must then account us righteous, without that Righteousness he requires us to practice. And, consequently, if God commands perfect Holiness of us, he cannot esteem us righteous in our own Obedience, if it is partial only and incomplete. We must be that in his Account, which we are an Fact, if his Judgment is according to Truth; righteous, if We have wrought such Righteousness as he demands of us in his Law; but unrighteous, if we have not. The necessary Consequence of which is this, that if God commands, or has made perfect Holiness our Duty, he cannot accept and justify us, if our Obedience is defective and imperfect, *viz*. on Account of that Obedience. This is perfectly agreeable to the Reasoning of the Apostle on this Subject. He concludes upon the Impossibility of the Justification of any Man by the Works of a Law, from hence, *viz*. every Man being a Sinner; and to be proved such by the Law: If therefore, there is any Force in his Reasoning, we must conclude, that no Man can be justified by any Law; according to which every Man, by Reason of his defective Obedience to it, is rightly denominated a Transgressor. And, therefore, if there is any Law given, by which Men may be justified, thro' their Obedience to it; by that Law, it can never be proved, that they are Sinners. And if there really is such a Law given, whereby Men cannot be convicted of Sin, then that Law commands not perfect Holiness; unless we will maintain, that Men are sinless and perfect in their Obedience. Once more: If by this Law, supposed to be accommodated to the

present State of human Imperfection and Weakness, Men may be justified, on Account of their own Works, in Obedience to it; then it demands or requires not perfect Holiness; so far from it, that no unfit Action, which hinders not our Justification, can truly be accounted criminal. If, therefore, a Man that commits Adultery or Murder, or any other unfit Action, may notwithstanding be justified by that Law, or by his own Works, performed in Obedience to it; by that Law he cannot be proved to be a Sinner; nor can such detestable Actions ever be proved criminal by that Law. The Absurdity, therefore, of this Distinction of Works, is very great, plain and evident; and as it has no Foundation in Revelation, it hath not in Reason; it is no other than a Figment, a Dream, or a foolish Invention of Men, to evade the Force of the Apostle's clear and nervous Reasoning on this important Subject.

5. If Men are justified in the Sight of God by the Works of a Law, then Christ died in vain, or there was no Necessity of his Death; that stupendous Transaction, answers no important End, respecting God as a Judge, nor the Law, nor Men. For if we may be justified by our own Obedience to a Law, then we cannot be accounted Sinners by that Law; and if we are not Transgressors, or reputed such, no atoning Sacrifice is required, in order to Peace and Reconciliation; God hath nothing against us, as our Lawgiver, and Judge; his Law charges us with no Offense, pronounces no Threatening against us, nor is the Justice of God displeased with us, and, consequently, no propitiatory Sacrifice was needful to be

offered for us, to secure our Pardon, to make Reconciliation, and effect our Recovery from Ruin; because no Danger can attend those, who are accepted with God on the Foundation of their own Works. For that Obedience which justifies, cannot subject Men to Condemnation and Death; that Obedience which entitles Men to Heaven, cannot reasonably be supposed to deserve Hell; on Account of any Imperfections attending it, however great, or many they may be. If it is said, that the Death of Christ was necessary to satisfy the perfect Law of God, which we have violated, and to redeem us from the Curse of that Law. I answer, (1.) If God can approve of Imperfection, he may dispense with the Want of a perfect Obedience. (2.) Then the Justice and Righteousness of God, did not require Satisfaction for Sin; and if Satisfaction for Sin was not required by the Justice of God, the Death of Christ was unnecessary to such an End. And if the Death of Christ was not necessary to make Atonement for Sin, his dying for Sinners, could not be necessary at all. (3.) If God can approve of, and justify Men, on Account of their own Works, tho' imperfect, then it is unreasonable to suppose, that their Imperfections subject them to his Displeasure; and if the defective Obedience of Men, does not subject them to the righteous Displeasure of God, but he accepts of them, notwithstanding their Defects; then it cannot be contrary to the Justice and Rectitude of the divine Nature, to forgive Offenses, and abate of the Command of Perfection, without any Satisfaction made for sin to his Law.

6. God *justifies Men who work not,* and therefore Works performed by them, cannot be the Cause of their Justification. *Crellius* says, that *they work not, or obey not perfectly*: This is not to explain, but to contradict the Apostle. He says the justified Person *worketh not {*Romans 4:5*}, i.e.* in order to his Justification; says *Crellius,* he does work to that End, and his Works justify him. The Distinction of working perfectly and imperfectly, is not to be found throughout the Apostle's Discourse on this Subject. What he intends, is working in order to Acceptance, or working such a Righteousness, as is acceptable and pleasing to God, and for which he might be justified. God justifies such who do not perform Obedience, that is acceptable to him, in itself, and therefore Works cannot be the Matter and Cause of their Justification. The Inference which *Crellius* draws from hence, is not more absurd, than it is unnatural and forced, *viz. That* Abraham *wrought nothing good, if this is true*; for the Design of the Apostle is to prove, that *Abraham* did not work out such an Obedience as justified his Person, and not, that he or any other Man, who is accepted with God, doeth no Good. It is one Thing not to perform good Works to Justification, and another, not to do any good Works: The former is true of *Abraham,* and of every other justified Person, the latter is not. These

Things sufficiently evince and prove, that Men are not justified by their own Works. If Justification is not *by a Law,* if it is not by *the Deeds of a Law,* if the Reward *is not of*

Debt, and *all Boasting is excluded,* if Men in Justification are accounted righteous, and they are in themselves *Sinners,* and may be proved such by the Law, which is the Rule of their Conduct, if the Death of Christ *was unnecessary,* upon a Supposition of justification by *Works,* and if Men are justified, *who work not a justifying Righteousness,* I say, if these Things are true, which undoubtedly they are, for the Apostle affirms them in the plainest Language; no Man is or can be justified in the Sight of God, by his own Obedience to a Law. And, therefore, we conclude, with the Apostle, and shall always insist upon it, *that by the Deeds of a Law, there shall no Flesh be justified in the Sight of God*.

The Justification of a Sinner consist of two Parts. First. The Non- Imputation or Pardon of Sin. This is thro' the Sufferings and Death of Christ. *God hath set him forth to be a Propitiation, thro' Faith in his Blood to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins*. *In him we have Redemption thro' his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins*. *Much more than being justified by his Blood*. The Sufferings of the blessed Jesus therefore, are the meritorious Cause of our Discharge from Guilt: God *for Christ's Sake, i.e*. on Account of his Death, *hath forgiven us*. So that he is the only procuring Cause of the Forgiveness of our Sins.

Secondly. The other Branch of Justification, is accounting a Man righteous, in order to which some Righteousness must be imputed to him either his own personal Righteousness, or

the Obedience and Righteousness of another. That a Sinner cannot be justified by his own Works, we have, I think, clearly proved; and therefore, if he is ever accepted and justified in the Sight of God, it must be by the Imputation of another's Righteousness. That so a Sinner is justified, I now proceed to prove.

1. *That* Righteousness of God, by which we are justified, is without a Law. Every righteous Law enjoins the Practice of Righteousness on Men; which if they perform, they have that very Righteousness, which the Law requires in order to Justification; and, therefore, it can never be said, with the least Appearance of Truth, that their justifying Righteousness is without a Law; because the Law demands a personal Obedience to Justification, and such theirs is. Hence we must necessarily conclude, that *that* Righteousness of God, whereby we are justified, is not our personal Obedience to a Law.

2. This Righteousness is *without the Deeds* of a Law, or it is a *Righteousness without Works*. If Men's personal Righteousness is the Matter of their Justification, that Righteousness consists of Deeds done by themselves, in Obedience to the Law, and is made up of their personal Works, and of such Works as the Law requires in order to Justification; otherwise they cannot be justified by it; and therefore, Mens own Righteousness cannot be the Matter of their Justification; for, in no Sense, can their own personal Righteousness, be said to be without the Deeds of a Law, or

without Works; and, consequently, we are justified by the Righteousness of another, which the Law makes no Discovery of, nor requires of us to Justification, and which is without any personal Works of ours. For in no other Sense, can Righteousness be said to be without the Deeds of a Law, and without Works; since all Righteousness is a Conformity to a Law, and is constituted of such Works, as are commanded by a Law.

3. That Righteousness whereby we are justified, in the Sight of God, is a free Gift. Hence it is called the *Gift of Righteousness*. If our Justifying Righteousness consists of our own Works, it is not a Gift; we have it in ourselves, or it is performed by ourselves, we do not derive it from another, and therefore it cannot be given to us. That Righteousness on Account of which we are justified, is a free Gift; and, consequently, it is not our own personal Righteousness, or Obedience to a Law.

4. That Righteousness or Obedience, whereby we are constituted, or made righteous, is our justifying Righteousness; and that is the Obedience of another, *viz*. Christ. *By the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous* {Romans. 5:19}. A Man that obeys the Law, is righteous in himself, and needs not any other Righteousness than his own, in order to his Justification; but he who hath not obeyed the Law, is unrighteous, and cannot be justified by his own Works; and the only Way of his being made righteous by the Obedience of another, is by the Imputation of the other's Obedience to him. The Apostle asserts, that we

are made righteous by the Obedience of one, *viz*. Christ; and therefore, his Righteousness is imputed to us, for our Justification. The *Socinians* and *Arminians,* and some others say, God deals with us, as if we were righteous for the Sake of Christ, or for the Sake of his Righteousness. The Apostle says, that we are *made* righteous. To receive Favours as if we were righteous, tho' we are not, nor are made so, is one Thing; and to be made righteous is quite another. It is the latter, that the divine Writer asserts, and not the former; from hence, therefore, it is rightly concluded, that the Righteousness of Christ, and not our own personal Obedience, is imputed to us, in Order to our Acceptance with God.

5. Our justifying Righteousness is revealed to Faith. It is *revealed from Faith to Faith {*Romans. 1:17}; and, therefore, it is not Faith itself That which is discovered to Faith, and whereupon it acts in Consequence of that Revelation of it, cannot be Faith: For that which is revealed to Faith, must be something distinct from it; for a Thing revealed, and that to which it is revealed, cannot be the same. They are certainly different. Hence, we must necessarily conclude, that Faith is not our justifying Righteousness. These Things are plainly expressed; they are not delivered in obscure and figurative Terms and Modes of Speech; but in Language so clear and evident, that all the Art and Criticism Men can use, will never stifle the Evidence which they afford, to the great Doctrine of Justification, without any Works of ours.

I shall now consider Mr. *Foster's* Account of the Apostle's Doctrine with Relation to Justification.
And,

I. He thinks it is evidently this: *That both Jews and Gentiles were, upon embracing the Gospel, and professing Faith in Christ, freed from the Guilt of all their past Sins, and brought into a State of Reconciliation with God, — that Faith was accepted for the Remission of Sins that were past, — and for the Remission of them only.* *

* *Vol. 3 of Sermons, page 31, 33.*

I observe,

1. That it is the Blood of Christ that cleanses from all Sin, and not Faith: That is accepted for the Remission of Sins; that was shed to that End; which was the Blood of Christ alone, and not Faith. Men enjoy Reconciliation with God, in Consequence of the Death of their Redeemer, who made *Peace* for them *by the Blood of his Cross*.
2. Tho' in the Justification of a Sinner, a Discharge from Guilt is necessarily included, yet that is not the whole of Justification; it supposes Acceptance as well as Pardon, accounting a Man righteous, as well as remitting his Sins. Now if Faith with the good Works which we allow it produces, recommends our Persons to God, then Justification is of a Law. — It is then of the Deeds of a Law. — Then it is

the proper Effect of our own personal Works, which the Apostle constantly denies; and, therefore, it is an Abuse of him, and an Affront to his Writings, to palm this Opinion upon them.

3. Sin that is really forgiven, will never be again charged; if any did not continue in Faith and good Works, then according to this Principle, some of their Sins were forgiven, and some not, which it is absurd to conceive.

4. I beg leave to ask what is the Cause of the Pardon of future Sins? Faith it seems is not; what then is? Such who believed the Gospel and professed Faith in Christ, afterwards sinned, for they were not perfect or sinless, after Faith and the Profession of it. The *Gentleman* produces no Place out of the Epistles of *Paul* to prove the Principles, which he advances, though he confidently tells us, that this is his Doctrine. Some Things he cites from him, to prove what we have never denied, what we have always acknowledged, and ever shall do, *viz*. that Faith is productive of Holiness and good Works; this is evidently the Doctrine of the Apostle *Paul*. But it don't follow from hence, that the Apostle taught, *that* Faith with its Fruits is the Matter and Cause of our Justification; it is one Thing to maintain that, *that* Faith, which apprehends our free Justification by Christ, is a holy Principle, and *works by Love*; and another to assert, that it is our Faith as a working Principle in the Heart, that recommends our Persons to God, and justifies us in his Sight, the former of these the Apostle constantly taught; but of the latter, there is a deep Silence, in all his Writings. It is falsely,

and without any Appearance of Truth, attributed to him by this Author, notwithstanding his Assurance and great Freedom in asserting it.

II. Mr. *Foster* goes on to observe, *that some have apprehended a Disagreement in the Writings of the Apostles* Paul *and* James *on this Argument — that* James *has been thought less evangelical, than the Apostle* Paul. *

* Page 34, 35.

Upon which Topic, the Author uses much Rhetoric, to show the Weakness and Folly of such Apprehensions; but in my humble Opinion there was not the least Necessity, to labour this Point, in the manner he does. That some among the Ancients doubted of the Authority of the Epistle of *James* is well known; but that any now do, I am not sensible, neither do I think, that there are any among us, who are of Opinion, that the Apostle *James* is less evangelical than the Apostle *Paul,* or who think, that there is any Inconsistency between what the two Apostles assert.

I can't but apprehend that the seeming Contrariety between these two divine Writers, as one observes, may be reconciled in three Words, That it is the mere Carcass of Faith, (but by no Means an active Faith and an Attendant of Salvation celebrated of the Apostle *Paul*) which as empty and barren *James* rejects. This Observation perfectly reconciles the two Apostles on this Argument. *Paul* treats of the Matter of

Justification, and *James* discourses of the true Nature and genuine Effects, which flow from a true Faith, that apprehends our justifying Righteousness.

III. This Author sets himself about the reconciling *Paul* and *James,* the Method he takes to do it, is this.

1. He tells us, *That when* Paul *says*, *that we are justified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law, it can amount to no more than this, that Faith is the Condition of Pardon and Justification, — and not absolute uncorrupted Innocence, or the Perfection of Virtue*. *

* Page 36.

I answer, 1. He will never be able to prove, that *Paul* has advanced this Doctrine, or any Thing like it. His Doctrine is plainly this, that the Righteousness of a Law — that a Righteousness consisting of our own personal Works, is not the Matter of our Justification before God. 2. It seems to me very improper to suggest, that Innocence is corrupt, Innocence is free from any Taint of Evil, if a Man is but in the lowest Degree corrupt in his Obedience, so far he is nocent, not innocent; guilty and not guiltless. 3. *Paul* has no where, insinuated, that an imperfect Obedience will be accepted with God, or justify the Subject of it in his Sight.
2. Says our Author, *is not this the very Thing which he* (James) so *earnestly contends for*, *viz. that Righteousness*

and Obedience are the Life of Faith. *

* Ibid.

Answer, It is true that *that* Faith which is not productive of Obedience is a dead and barren Faith; but it doth not follow, that Faith and the Effects of it are the Cause of our Justification before God.

3. *Or suppose the former to have meant, that the Ceremonial Law, under the Gospel Dispensation, is no Part of acceptable Religion*. *

* Ibid.

Answer. The Apostle *Paul* cannot mean the Ceremonial Law, because in this Discourse he says not a Word concerning it. Again, he intends a Law that requires Obedience in order to Justification, and by which the Knowledge of Sin, is obtained, neither of which is true of the Ceremonial Law.

4. Says he, *If again we take St*. Paul *thus*; *that upon Faith in Christ — God was pleased to be propitious and receive his guilty Creatures into Favor, notwithstanding their former Irregularities*. *

* Page 37.

I answer, 1. Sir, you seem inclined to take him in any other Sense, than his true Meaning. 2. *Paul* teaches us, that God is

propitious and reconciled to Men before they believe: *If when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son*; and, therefore, it is not Faith that renders God reconciled. It must be something else. 3. Faith is an Effect and not a Cause of our Reconciliation with God, according to the Doctrine of the Apostle *Paul*. 4. He teaches, that the Death of Christ is the Cause and Foundation of Peace and Reconciliation with God, and therefore, Faith is not the Cause or Foundation of it.

5. This *Gentleman* observes, *that* Paul *taught, that without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*. I answer, 1. He did so, and so do we; but he did not teach that our personal Holiness is the Matter of our Justification, and that it entitles us to the heavenly State; he always taught the Necessity of Holiness, as our Meetness for Heaven; but he has no where declared, that it gives us a Right to Happiness. 2. It is false Reasoning, to conclude, that Obedience is unnecessary, because it is not allowed to be our justifying Righteousness. Mr. *Foster* having dispatched the first Branch of his Subject, he proceeds to show what the Apostle designs, in censuring the *Jews,* for going about to establish their own Righteousness. Two Things he allows, with Respect to our personal Righteousness: 1. That it is *imperfect, and that therefore, none can entertain Hopes of being justified by it, if perfect Rectitude, is required in order to Justification*. *

* Page 39.

The *Jews* then, did not pretend that their Righteousness was perfect and unblemished, or that a complete Obedience to the Law was in dispensably required to their Acceptance with God, and, consequently, if the Apostle, when he excludes Works from Justification, intends only perfect Works, or an unerring Obedience to the Law, there was really no difference between him and the *Jews*. They were perfectly agreed, in this, that complete Righteousness, is not the Condition of Men's Acceptance with God. 2. He grants, that *our moral. Righteousness, when carried to the utmost Height it is at present capable of, cannot be said, in strict Justice, to merit that glorious Reward of eternal Life*. *

* Page 40.

On which, I observe, 1. That, an unerring Obedience, cannot be said, in strict Justice to merit that Reward; because, it is due to God, it would be performed in his Strength, and there is no Proportion, between that Obedience, and this Reward. 2. The *Jews* surely did not think, that they merited eternal Life, by their strictest Observation of the Law, since they were conscious of Imperfections, attending their Obedience, and therefore, if the Apostle only excluded Works, which they might apprehend, in strict Justice merited the Reward, *viz*. perfect Works, there still was no difference between him and them; all Controversy might have ceased, betwixt the Apostle and the *Jews,* if they had understood one another, with Respect to the Influence Men's personal Righteousness

has into their Salvation. The only Difference, which, upon this Principle, can be supposed, to have subsisted between them, is this; the *Jews* apprehended, that good Works were of themselves, without Faith in Christ, sufficient to Salvation; and the Apostle maintained, that Faith in him, was to be superadded to their Obedience to the Law of Righteousness if they would enter into Life. Hence therefore, it must be concluded, that the Apostle was at the Expense of great Labour to prove to them, what they did not doubt of, *viz*. That perfect Obedience is not required of Men in order to Life, and that imperfect Obedience, in strict Justice, cannot merit Heaven; neither of which, they ever believed or dreamt of. The Apostle therefore instead of excluding Works from Justification, should have told them, you are right in seeking Life, by your own personal Obedience to the Laws of God; your only Mistake is denying *Jews* to be the *Messiah*. If he had so done, they would never have charged him, as they did, with advancing licentious Principles, *viz*. That we may do Evil that Good may come. They could not have done so, for there would not have been the least show of Truth in such a Charge.

After granting these two Things, he briskly enquires, *But of what of all this? Because Mankind are incapable of pleasing their Maker, by yielding an absolute and invariable Obedience to the eternal Law of Righteousness*; *does it follow from hence, that they cannot render themselves acceptable to him, by a universal Course of sincere*

Obedience? Are good Dispositions and sincere Endeavors to serve and honor him, of no Significancy, with the wisest and most compassionate of all Beings, for want of something, which the very original Constitution of our Nature has quite put it out of our Power? Is the prevailing Turns and Biass of our Minds insufficient to plead for us; *and are involuntary and un-allowed Imperfections of Weight enough, even with impartial Mercy, to condemn us? Because Virtue, does not properly, and in an exact Notion of Equality, merit the transcendent Honor and Felicity, to which it is the gracious Appointment of God, that it shall be hereafter advanced*; *has it therefore, no Loveliness and Worth in it, to render it as a fit and suitable Object of peculiar Favor and Complacency? These, surely, are Inferences drawn at Random, etc*. *

* Page 41.

Sir, you are pleased to write here with a great Air of Triumph and Confidence, and seem to think, that you have unquestionably, gained your Point of establishing Works, as the Matter of our Justification; but let me beg the Favor of you to be cool and deliberate a little, as you have desired others to be, then, perhaps, you may see Reason to conclude that there is nothing of Weight in all this, against the Doctrine of Justification, without our own personal Obedience to a Law.

1. Since you allow, that Men cannot possibly perform the whole of their Duty, you ought to have proved, and you must prove, before you can reasonably expect to have the Point, for which you contend, granted you, that God will accept of and justify Men for a partial Obedience to his Law. This you have not yet done, nor will you ever be able to do it, I am firmly persuaded.

2. If a universal Course of sincere Obedience, is indispensably required, as a Condition of Happiness, then, (1.) Those, who have failed of yielding such a Course of sincere Obedience to the Law of God, must inevitably perish. (2.) The Fate therefore, of those, who have been at all dissolute in their Behavior, is miserable, without Remedy. (3.) If you say, that upon Repentance and Reformation, such may hope for Mercy; provided that, they afterwards yield this universal and sincere Obedience. I would answer, that a Man guilty of *Dissimulation* and *Lying,* of *Adultery* and *Murder, etc*. fails of yielding a universal Obedience to the Law of God, and therefore, if any Person after Repentance commits such Sins, he cannot be just with God, if a universal Obedience is the Condition required to Justification. As yet I cannot be persuaded, but that *Abraham* and *David, etc*. were accepted with God, though, I know, that they were guilty even after Repentance, of the Vices mentioned.

3. Such is the Rectitude of the Nature of God, that he cannot approve of Virtue, as imperfect, if he can, he may will and command it: For what he approves he may require, yea, he might make Man such, as he approves, and therefore, if he

can accept of Men, as imperfect, he might have made Man imperfect. If this is true be did, for ought we know, or are able to prove to the contrary. He approves of virtuous Actions, as virtuous; but he disapproves of virtuous Actions, as they are imperfect. And it is only a perfectly holy Obedience that can be acceptable to him, and justify his Creatures in his Sight. He does not condemn Men, for doing an Act, which he commands; but he condemns them, for not performing that Act, in the Manner and with such Views as he requires them to do it. So did *Jehu*.

4. It is false that the original Constitution of our Nature was defective, if Respect is had to the Nature of Man, as he was created of God, for God made Man upright. If Regard is had to the Nature of Man in his fallen State, his Imperfection in the Constitution of his Nature, is the Effect of a Criminal Behavior in Man, and therefore, that is no Excuse for the Defect of his Obedience to the Law.

5. What you mean by impartial Mercy I do not pretend to know. This is certain, that God is under no Obligation, to spare and pardon any Sinner. It is of his Sovereign Pleasure, that he hath Mercy on some; he had a Right to refuse it, and therefore, no Partiality is to be imputed to divine Mercy, if God does not accept of an imperfect Obedience from any Man, or if he condemns some for the Imperfection of their Obedience to his holy and just Law. Of impartial Justice I have some Idea, because Right is therein concerned; but I have none of impartial Mercy, because Mercy never acts upon the foot of Right, but freely.

6. Must Men for ever despair of Mercy, who have been guilty of voluntary and allowed Sins? This Reasoning leaves them without any Foundation of Hope, at all, and therefore it is most certainly false.

7. Imperfect Virtue hath no such Loveliness and Worth in it, as to render it the fit Object of the peculiar Favor and Complacency of God. 'Tis surprising, that any rational Creature can be so far lost to a Sense of the infinite Holiness of the Nature of God, as once to imagine, that it hath, and it is much more so, that he can express the Thought with such an Air of Confidence, as if it was, as evidently true, as any first Principle can be. Whatever hath such Loveliness and Worth in it, as renders it the fit and suitable Object of the peculiar Favor and Complacency of God, he may undoubtedly be the Author of, for surely, God may effect that which is the Object of his peculiar Favor and Complacency. If imperfect Virtue is an Object so pleating to him, he may be the Author of our imperfect Virtue, which it is absurd to think. Besides, no Pardon can have Place in what thus recommends itself to the peculiar Favor of the divine Being. Nor, is it any Act of Mercy to accept of our imperfect Obedience, and justify us on that Foundation: If it is thus lovely and valuable. I pass on to consider Mr. *Foster's* Objections to the Doctrine of the Imputation of Christ's Obedience to us for our Justification. And,

I. He objects, *That God might of his Sovereign Pleasure have determined to impute the Righteousness of another to Devils,*

and that, upon that Imputation, they would have been represented before the supreme Justice, as perfect, with the same strict Truth and Propriety, as sinful Men can be. *

* Page 42.

I do not here transcribe the whole of what he says, because the Strength of his Objection sufficiently appears without it. I answer,

1. It is not said or thought, that this Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Men, changes their Nature; it is only an Implantation of holy Principles into the Hearts of Men, that makes them inherently holy. We will grant him all he can desire on this Head, and give him full Liberty to make the most of it he is able.
2. Though this Imputation changes not the Natures of Men, it secures their complete Sanctification: So that it gives room to none to expect Happiness without Holiness.
3. It is accounting Men righteous who are not so in themselves; but are made so by the Imputation of the perfect Righteousness of Christ to them. The blessed *Jesus* was our Surety, and paid our Debt, his Payment is reckoned to us, hence we are acquitted of our Guilt, and justified on the Foundation of what he did and suffered, as our Sponsor. Nor is there any Thing absurd in this more than there is in a Creditor's imputing to a Debtor the Payment of his Debt, by

a Surety, and thereupon esteeming him no longer a Debtor to himself.

3. Sinners, as in themselves, cannot be accounted righteous, because they are not really so; nor can be so made, inherently; for if once a Transgressor is made inherently righteous, he is no longer a Sinner. Mr. *Foster* must necessarily, therefore, if he will maintain the Justification of imperfect sinful Men, he cannot avoid it, assert that God reckons them to be what they are not, in themselves, and what he does not make them, *i.e*. Righteous, without a Righteousness, personal, or imputative. Which is a manifest Absurdity.

4. The Author speaks of this Imputation to Devils, perhaps, with a twofold View, (1.) To expose the Doctrine to Contempt; but this End cannot be answered by it; for that which secures perfect Holiness to imperfect Creatures, will never be less valuable in itself, nor the less to be desired, because some Men are pleased to despise it. Besides, what Force of Reasoning is there in this Objection? None at all. It is no more than inferring, that, since the Act of Imputation makes no inherent Change in the Subject of it, there can be no Imputation of another's Righteousness to a Sinner. The Force of the Objection therefore, will never affect the Truth, how much soever the Boldness of it may surprise serious and humble Minds, who dare not depend on their own Works for Acceptance with God; because of the Imperfections attending them, though it may be they might do this, with no more Danger than this *Gentleman*. (2.) This Objection might

be started, that, the Author might have full Scope, to exercise his Rhetoric in drawing the Picture of an Apostate Creature, and at the same Time prevent his Hearers and Readers, thinking, that fallen Man is the Subject of that Rebellion, Malice and Envy, *etc*. which he imputes to Devils; left such a Representation of human Nature, should offend and weaken his Arguments to prove, that there is an innate Power in Men to do Good and obtain Happiness.

Object. 2. *The Scriptures teach that, not Christ's Obedience*; *but our own Faith is imputed to us for Righteousness*. *

f130 * Page 44.

***Answ*. 1.** That Obedience by which Men are made righteous is imputed to them, for that is the only possible way wherein we can be made righteous by the Obedience of another. We are made righteous by the Obedience of Christ, and consequently his Obedience is imputed to us, or made ours, by an Act of Sovereign Favor. Again, Righteousness without Works is imputed to us, that Righteousness cannot be our own personal Obedience to the Law of God, it must be the Obedience of another, because that is the only Sense, in which, it can be said with Propriety, that Righteousness is without Works. 2. Faith itself is not imputed; but the Object of it, as I hope, is fully and clearly proved in my Answer to Ruin and Recovery, to which I beg leave to refer the Reader for Satisfaction on this Point.

Object. 3. *Then we are not in ourselves moral and accountable Creatures*. *

* Ibid.

***Answ*. 1.** Creatures subject to a Law are certainly accountable. Men are subject to a Law and eternally will be, and therefore, they will for ever be accountable, though not in order to the Acceptance of their Persons and the Enjoyment of Bliss. To this End, such to whom Christ's Righteousness is imputed, are not now accountable. 2. And, therefore, we are not under the Law in order to Justification by our Performance of the Works of it. Christ is the End of the Law in this View to all his People. 3. But it no way follows from hence, that we are not obliged to practice the Duties of it. For our Obligation to obey the Law, arises not from the Promise of Reward annexed to its Precepts, in Case of Obedience; but from our Dependence on the Lawgiver, and his Command in his Law.

Object. 4. *God can demand nothing more of us*: *Repentance, personal Reformation and inherent Rectitude are entirely needless*. *

* Page 45.

***Answ*. 1.** God requires not Obedience in order to our Acceptance with him, if he should, we must perish inevitably. Because God cannot accept of and justify us; but upon our yielding a sinless Obedience to his Law which we cannot do. 2. But still he requires Righteousness and Obedience of us, though not with a View to our Justification, as we obey, or to our Condemnation, as we disobey his holy and perfectly just Law. 3. And, therefore, the Believer, is under an indispensable Obligation to Obedience, notwithstanding his Justification by the Righteousness of Christ. 4. The Saints are so fully convinced of the intrinsic Excellence of Holiness, and of the Malignity of Sin — and they have such a Sense of divine Goodness, which has acted in their Favor, that they most freely love and chuse Holiness, and detest and forsake Sin; though their most important Interest is fully and everlastingly secured by the Blood and Righteousness of Christ.

Object. 5. *This Imputation of another's Righteousness makes not Men holy, etc*. *

* Page 46.

***Answ*. 1.** The Substance of this Objection has been before expressed, and it has been before answered. 2. It is allowed, that the Act of Imputation works no physical Change in us; the Reason is evident, it is an Act in God towards us, and not a divine Act put forth upon us. 3. We are not accounted

righteous in ourselves, upon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, but only as inverted with that perfect Righteousness. 4. We shall be sanctified and made completely holy in Consequence of our Justification, by the Obedience of Christ imputed to us.

Object. 6. *Christ's Obedience was wholly due for himself, and therefore, it cannot be imputed to any other Person.* *

* Ibid.

***Answ.* 1.** Christ had a Right to Glory upon a higher Foundation, than that of his Obedience, *viz.* his personal Union with the Sort of God. (The Doctrine of Christ's Deity Mr. *Foster* denies; but I beg leave to take it for granted in answering to this Objection) And therefore, Obedience was not required of him on his own Account. 2. He was made under the Law for us by a special Constitution or Appointment. 3. His Obedience to the Law, was therefore performed for us, and it is imputed to us in order to our Acceptance and Justification. I desire to conclude this Subject with a serious Address to the Reader. It is proper to think closely of the Holiness and Greatness of God our righteous Judge, before whom *the Heavens are not clean, and who charges his Angels with Folly. He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*. Sin is contrary to his infinitely pure Nature, he cannot, therefore, but abhor it. Due Apprehensions of divine Holiness, and Indignation against

Sin, will raise in our Minds a holy Dread of appearing before God's awful Tribunal, where Justice we are sure will be administered with the utmost Impartiality and Strictness. Consider how many your Transgressions have been, what Duties you have neglected, and what Evils you have committed, and what Imperfections attend, even your best Services, what vain and wandering Thoughts, arise and gain upon your Mind in the most sacred and solemn Duties, with what Coolness, and want of Love to the infinitely glorious Object of your devotional Acts, your religious Performances are mingled; as well as, how backward you have sometimes, and in some Instances been, to the Discharge of them. Consider with yourself the great Depravity of your Heart — what evil Habits it is the Subject of — what numberless unholy Conceptions it naturally forms, and then think, that you must stand before and be judged by an infinite Being, who hates all Sin, and who perfectly knows all your Offense and Imperfections, and who cannot but disapprove of them. If you form a right Notion of God your just and righteous Judge, and of yourselves, as unholy and guilty, you will proceed with proper Caution in your Enquiries, about the Way of your Acceptance with him in Judgment. But if you have slight Thoughts of Sin, of divine Resentment against it, and flatter and relieve your Minds under a Consciousness of Guilt, and some Apprehensions of the Demerit of it, according to the Law, from a bare Consideration of divine Mercy without a proper Consideration, at the same Time, of divine Justice and Vengeance against all Unrighteousness, no

Wonder, if you content yourselves with flight and superficial Arguments, in Favor of Justification, by your own imperfect and defiled Obedience. But if these Things have their proper and necessary Weight with you, you will say, as holy *Job* did, *How shall Man be just with God?* You will be convinced, that it is impossible, that, he should be justified in his Sight by his own personal Obedience, because, that is imperfect and polluted, and God is infinitely pure and holy, and necessarily hates all Sin. Consider the Danger which attends being mistaken in this Point, that the Consequence will be more dreadful than Language can express, or the Mind conceive, if you reject that Way of Acceptance which God has provided and appointed, you will certainly be condemned in Judgment, and inevitably sink into Ruin, into black Horror and Despair, If, therefore, there was but so much as a Probability of the Truth of the Doctrine of Justification by the Obedience of Christ, it would be the safest, and, consequently, the wisest Method, when you have been as exact, watchful and regular in your Behavior, as you possibly could be, to renounce your own Works, with Respect to Justification in the Sight of God, and to depend solely and alone on the Blood and Righteousness of Christ for Pardon of Sin and Acceptance with God your supreme Judge. No Damage can attend this humble Acting of your Souls, you will not be the less accepted with God if you endeavor to obey him, though you should not think, that your imperfect Obedience recommends you to his Favor — you will not lose the Reward any may think is due to Virtue,

because, you cannot be persuaded, that such imperfect Virtue, as yours is, can be rewarded with the Glory of Heaven.

CHAPTER 12 OF THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST

THE Doctrine of the Mediation of Jesus Christ, is of the greatest Importance. It is the only Foundation of a sure and solid Hope, that Sinners can have of Reconciliation with God, and of enjoying him, the Origin of all Blessedness. And it is divine Revelation alone, which can give us an Assurance, that God will pardon and save rebellious Creatures; and inform us in what Way Criminals may be accepted with God, and rendered happy, consistent with the Honor of all his Perfections. As has been before observed, the Light of Nature is sufficient to acquaint us, in some Measure, with our deplorable State, in Consequence of Sin; but here it leaves us, and cannot be a Guide to our Recovery and Happiness: And, therefore, in our Enquiries into the Doctrine of the Mediation of Christ, it is irrational to appoint Reason to judge and determine concerning the Nature, Efficiency, and Ends of his Mediatorial Actions. In this Affair, imperfect Reason is wholly ignorant, and necessarily must be, because Reason, in its State of Perfection, could only know, that God would certainly accept of the unerring Obedience of his perfect Creatures. Reason, in that State,

could not possibly resolve, whether, upon a Breach of the Law, God would execute the Threatening denounced against Disobedience, or whether he would pardon and save: Much less, had it any Means of knowing what Method would be the fitter and best to take, in order to recover from deserved Ruin; and, consequently, it is not rational to constitute imperfect Reason a Judge in these Matters. Let us then humbly submit our Reason to the Discoveries of Revelation, relating to these Points, and embrace without any Scruple, the Doctrine of the holy Scriptures concerning those Subjects.

I. Sin or moral Impurity is contrary to the holy Nature of God, and he cannot but be displeased with it. His righteous Soul necessarily abhors that filthy Thing Sin. *He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity,* without Indignation, and awful Resentment. A holy Man views moral Turpitude, with Detestation: The Malignity of the evil Nature of Sin excites his utmost Hatred, and causes him to with for its utter Destruction. And can we think, that infinite Rectitude is able to spare and bear it in Sight? We must be strangely sunk in our Notions of the Holiness of God, or be under the Influence of strong Prejudice in Favor of ourselves, as Creatures guilty and vile, if we make a Difficulty of allowing, that moral Imperfection is the Object of the infinite Abhorrence of God our supreme Judge.

II. All Mankind are Sinners: Human Nature has lost its original Righteousness, and is become the Subject of innumerable vile Lusts. Men universally have erred from the Way of Holiness, and gone into the Paths of Sin. *We have all sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*. Not an innocent Person is to be found among the human Race. Who of Mankind, can say with Truth, my Heart is pure, my Hands are unpolluted, and I have done no Iniquity? Not one; we are all guilty in the Sight of God, and deserve his Displeasure. If he should be *strict to mark Iniquity,* none of the human Species would be able *to stand*. Consequently,

III. No Man can be approved of God, and justified in his Sight, considered in himself. Our righteous Judge cannot account us that which we are not, nor are made; if, therefore, we are Criminals, he cannot esteem us innocent and obedient, nor reward us for our Actions. If our Conduct really merits his Displeasure, it is impossible that it should interest us in his Approbation and Favor. God undoubtedly forms a right Judgment of, and puts a true Value upon Actions; if, therefore, it is possible for him to accept of Services, that are tinctured with Sin, as so considered, what Assurance can we have, that he will not some time or other, reject those which have no such Tincture? If he is able to approve the guilty, as such, how may we be certain, that the innocent will never be the Objects of his Dislike and Aversion? It is as rational to think, that infinite Wisdom may be delighted with Folly, as to imagine, that infinite Holiness

can approve of Imperfection. And, therefore, no Person among us, can be accepted with the God of Truth and Holiness, as considered in himself. We are all, without Exception, obnoxious to his dreadful Anger: And it would be just in him to *punish* every one of us, *with everlasting Destruction, from his Presence, and the Glory of his Power*. He will, *by no means, clear the guilty,* without a proper Provision for the maintaining his Authority in the Law, and the Vindication of his Holiness and Justice in doing it, *God is a consuming Fire,* and so we shall certainly find him, unless his Justice is satisfied; to the Resentment of which we have exposed ourselves, by the Omission of Duties, and the imperfect Manner, wherein we have performed every Act of Obedience, and by the Perpetration of numerous Crimes.

IV. The Goodness of God lays him under no Obligation to provide for the Recovery, of his Creatures, who have destroyed themselves by Sin. For it is no Reflection on his Goodness, to permit Justice to take Place in the Infliction of deserved Penalty. The guilty suffering Creature, will not have Cause to charge God with Cruelty, under the greatest Tortures Justice shall inflict for Sin. It is Matter of free Choice with God, whether the criminal Creature shall be spared or punished. To pardon and save a Sinner is Mercy, or at is the Exercise of the Attribute of Mercy; but as no Offender can plead a Right to Impunity, it must wholly be resolved into the Sovereign Will of God, if he shows Mercy to any Transgressor. It is no Act of Unkindness to resolve

upon the Execution of the Threatening of the Law against Sin: And, therefore, the Goodness of God may perfectly consist with his punishing of Men, who have rendered themselves worthy of Death, by a Violation of his holy and just Law.

V. Unless God had provided for our Recovery and Salvation, which he was not obliged to do, our State would have been inevitably miserable. We were absolutely unable to raise ourselves out of those Depths of Misery, into which our Sins have plung'd us. *No Man can by any Means redeem his Brother, nor give to God a Ransom for him*: *The Redemption of the Soul is precious, and it ceases for ever*; *i.e*. with Man {Psalms. 49:7-8}. Who could bear the Weight of the Guilt of Sin, without sinking under it? Who of Mankind could sustain the dreadful Curse that Sin demerits, and not be miserable? What Person could stand under the Wrath of the Almighty, and not faint under that insupportable Weight? Not one among us. Stubble might as soon resist the Force of devouring Fire, as we endure *the flaming Vengeance* of an angry God. A few Drops of divine Wrath let fall upon us, give us inexpressible Torture; what Agonies therefore, must the full Flow of that scorching Fury throw us into? If the present View of the Terrors of a holy incensed God *distracts* us, how shall we be able to endure the terrible full Prospect of his infinite Displeasure against our Sins? It is no Mistake, that God is infinitely offended with our Crimes. His Indignation against Sin, is not the *mere* Imagination of a

melancholy and disordered Mind, 'tis *real*; and so we shall find it, to our endless Confusion, if we do not *flee for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope set before us,* in the Gospel of his Grace.

VI. The good Will and Favor of God caused him to resolve upon the Salvation and Happiness of some of his guilty Creatures, not apostate Spirits, but sinful Men. Not all Mankind; but a Part of the human Race. These Persons *he loved with an everlasting Love,* and his eternal Grace, Goodness and Mercy, is the Source from which their Recovery and endless Bliss spring. Nothing in them could induce him to save and render them happy: For all their Holiness, which is their Meetness for Heaven, is the Effect, and not the Cause of his choosing them to Salvation. Because *they are ordained to everlasting Life, they believe {*Acts. 13:48}. Because *they are chosen to Salvation, they are sanctified by the Spirit {*2Thessalonians 2:13}. So that their Holiness is the Result of their eternal Election in Christ {Eph esians. 1:4}, and not the Foundation on which that divine Decree is built. Their holy Vocation is according to that gracious Purpose formed in the divine Mind concerning them {2Timothy. 1:9}; and, therefore, the Foresight of Holiness in them, could not be the Reason why God determined to save them.

VII. Tho' the sovereignly gracious God, decreed to deliver them from Sin, and all the penal Effects of it, and to confer

Honor and Happiness upon them; his Wisdom directed to provide for the Glory of all his Attributes in the Accomplishment of that Decree. His Grace would triumph in their Recovery, but Justice would not allow, that it should be upon its Ruins. Goodness would shine with an amazing Lustre, in their Salvation; but Holiness would not permit its Glory to be obscured and veil'd in their Recovery. Divine Mercy would magnify itself in their Remission, but Righteousness insisted upon the Punishment of Sin; that Sinners might be saved in such a Way as would not be to its Prejudice. Infinite Wisdom alone could provide an Expedient for answering the just Demands of each Perfection, and for preserving an entire Harmony among the divine Attributes, in the great Affair of Salvation. As God alone could do this, he has made such Provision,

VIII. God chose and constituted Christ to be a *Days-man* and Mediator, between himself and the People whom he intended to save: For this Reason our Saviour is spoken of under the Character of the Father's Elect: *Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth* {Isaiah. 42:2}. He chose him from among the People; and ordained him to this Office: *Who verily was fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World* {1Peter. 1:20}. Christ on his Part freely took this Office upon himself, and voluntarily engaged to do and suffer whatever the Law and Justice required, in order to the eternal Salvation of those Persons, in

a Way becoming all the divine Perfections: Hence he is stiled *the Surety of a better Testament*.

IX. Our Redeemer has all the Requisites of a Mediator between God and Sinners: Or he is in every Respect, what it was necessary, that the Mediator should be.

1. He is Man, and the Son of Man. It was proper, that he who undertook to save Sinners of the human Race, should be Man, not only because Justice required a Satisfaction in the same Nature that had sinned; but also that he might be fit to be an Head to those Persons, he was to save and bear the tenderest Affection to them: For these Reasons he was *made of a Woman,* and so he was the Son of Man, as well as of the human Species.

2. Our Saviour was a holy innocent Man. Innocency was a necessary Qualification in the Redeemer. For, no Offender is able to satisfy for his own Offenses, much less, can he satisfy for the Sins of others. Christ is *an High-Priest,* that *becomes us,* as he is, *holy, harmless and undefiled*. The first *Adam* was not an Head to him, or he did not represent him; and therefore, tho' he was to be Man, and the Son of Man, yet he was not to be conceived in a natural Way, as all those are, to whom *Adam* was a Representative: If he had so been, he could not have escaped that Pollution, which attends all his natural Descendants. His being *separate from Sinners,* in his Conception, is the true Reason of the Holiness of his Nature.

3. He is God: It was absolutely necessary that the Saviour of Sinners should possess infinite Perfections, that an infinite Merit might attend his Obedience and Sufferings. Sin hath such Demerit in it, as the Object is against whom it is committed: And, therefore, greater Punishment is due to Sin against God, than is due to Sin against a Creature; and by the same Reason that Penalty in any Degree greater, is demerited by sinning against God, than against a Creature, infinite Punishment must become due by transgressing his Law, because he is infinitely great and glorious. Our gracious Mediator is God, and equal in Majesty to our righteous and offended Judge. *He is the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person* {Hebrews. 1:3}. *God over all, blessed for ever* Ro 9:6. *Being in the Form of God, he thought it no Robbery to be equal with God* {Philippians. 2:6}. He *is the true God, and eternal Life* {1John. 5:20}. Being Man he was capable of obeying and suffering; and being also God, his Obedience and Sufferings are of infinite Value. For such as the Person is, who obeys and suffers; such in Dignity and Worth are his Obedience and Sufferings. As our Lord, who obeyed and suffered for us, was infinitely great; his Obedience and Sufferings are *infinitely* valuable. And, therefore, the Law is *magnified* and made *honorable,* by his Subjection to it, obeying of it, and suffering its Curse. Again, unless our Saviour is God; he cannot have a complete Knowledge of all the Wants of all his People, nor can he supply them. Christ *searches the Hearts, and tries the Reins of Men*; and, consequently, he must be acquainted with all

the Necessities of his Saints, and is able to supply them. Besides, divine Power is necessary to be exercised in their Favor, to preserve them in Dangers, to support them under Difficulties, and to prevent their Ruin; seeing that they are encompassed with numerous, potent, and malicious Enemies. The united Force of Sin, Satan, and the World cannot destroy them, because their Redeemer, is the *mighty God,* he is the *Lord of Hosts*. They are saved by *the Lord their God, and David their King*.

4. The divine and human Nature are most intimately united in Christ. *The Word was made Flesh* {John. 1:14}; and the Obedience Sufferings of our Saviour, are to be considered as the Obedience and Sufferings of his entire Person: Of his human Nature, subjectively; of his divine, relatively; or as it as in Union, and concurred with the human Nature in obeying and suffering: For which Reason his Blood is called the *Blood of God*. The Work assigned to Christ our Mediator, was most important to the Glory of God, and the Good of his People. We may observe, that it is different according to three distinct Offices, which our glorious Mediator acts in. The Mediatorial Office is general, and includes his Sacerdotal, Prophetic, and Kingly Offices. In this Order I speak of them, because it is in this Method I desire to treat of those Offices.

1. He was a Priest: *Thou art a Priest for ever, after the Order of* Melchisedec {Psalms. 110:4}. He is *the Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession* {Hebrews. 3:1}. Our blessed Lord, *did not glorify himself, to be made an High-Priest*; *but he*

that said unto him, thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee {Hebrews. 5:5}. The Father invested him with this Office. And he was a Priest, when on the Earth, or before his Ascension to Heaven. The Objection which *Socinian* Writers make to this, taken from these Words of the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*: *For if he were on the Earth, he should not be a Priest, seeing that there are Priests, that offer Gifts according to the Law* {Hebrews. 8:4}, is very weak and trifling. The Intention of the holy Writer, is to prove, that the Messiah was to be a Priest, but not of the Order of *Aaron*; nor to officiate in any of the Services which the Priests were called to by the Law; or that he could not be a Priest according to the Law, because the Law limited the Priesthood to the Tribe of *Judah,* of which Tribe Jesus was not; and, therefore, by the Law he could not be a Priest at all. His Design is not to prove, that while Christ was on the Earth, he was not a Priest; but to prove, that he could not be in the priestly Office according to the Law; because the Law restrained that Office to mortal Men on the Earth, who were of the Tribe before-mentioned, of which Tribe he was not; and consequently, since he was a Priest, he must be constituted such by another Appointment; and to act in a higher Sphere, and to far more noble Ends, than any of those Priests did or could do: *Who were made Priests, after the Law of a carnal Commandment, and not after the Power of an endless Life* {Hebrews. 7:16}, which Christ was. This is the clear, strong and conclusive Reasoning of the divine

Writer in this Place. His Work, as a Priest, consists of two Branches.

(1.) To offer a Sacrifice for Sin. Offering of Sacrifice enters into the Nature of the sacerdotal Office; no Man can be a Priest without it. Wherefore, as the holy Writer says, *it is of Necessity, that this Man have somewhat to offer*; otherwise he could not be a Priest. It was not required of him to offer Bulls, or Goats, or Beasts of any Kind, in Sacrifice, *for it was not possible, that the Blood of Bulls or of Goats should take away Sin*; by whosoever they were offered to God in Sacrifice. But it was expected of him to offer himself as a Sacrifice: His own Blood he must shed, his own Life he must resign, if he will answer the important Ends of his Constitution to this Office. He most freely consented to the Will of God, in this Matter, and agreed to become a Victim, a bloody Sacrifice for sinful Men; so great was his Love to them, and so intense was his Desire to save them. His Father's Pleasure, and his own voluntary Engagement to suffer, said him under an Obligation, not to be dispensed with, to die. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these Things, and to enter into his Glory* {Luke. 24:26}. He stood obliged to *lay down his Life for the Sheep,* by the *Commandment* of the Father, and in Consequence of his own free Promise. In dying he was a Sacrifice for Sin. For, the Sins of others were imputed to him. *The Lord laid on him the Iniquity of us all* Isa 53:6. *He knew no Sin*; *but was made Sin for us* {2 Corinthians. 5:21}. *He bore our Sins in his own Body on the*

Tree {1Peter. 2:24}. The Charge on him of the Guilt of the Persons for whom he died, was prefigured by the Priest's Confession of Sin over the Heads of the Beasts, which were sacrificed under the Law. They bore it typically, only; but Christ bore it really.

Again, in Consequence of the Imputation of Guilt to him, he became liable to the Curse due to it, or obnoxious to Penalty. His Sufferings were properly penal, as all suffering under a Charge of Guilt, or in Consequence of an Imputation of it to any Subject, must necessarily be. And, therefore, he *was made a Curse,* or that Condemnation of the Law, which follows upon the Breach of its Precepts, was inflicted on him in suffering, in the Stead of Sinners and for their Transgressions: *Being made a Curse for us*. Farther, he endured the Displeasure of the Father, who, as a righteous Judge, was infinitely offended with Sin. The Sword, not of a Creature, but of God himself, was commanded to *awake* against and *finite* him. His Father, when he was mocked by wicked Men, and in Torture, and forsook by all his Friends, hid his Face from him, which affected and grieved him more, than all the other afflictive Circumstances, that attended him on the Cross. These Things clearly prove, that he underwent the Punishment due to the Persons for whom he died, and, therefore, we may conclude upon the Truth of the Particulars following, — That Guilt is expiated, or that *Transgression is finished, and Sin made an End of,* relating to those, Persons for whom he suffered. He *purged our Sins,* or *put them away*

by the Sacrifice of himself: And, *hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*. — That those on whose Account he died, or became a Victim, a bloody Sacrifice, are redeemed from Condemnation: *Who shall condemn it is Christ that died*. — That they therefore, shall not come into Condemnation, or suffer Punishment: *Being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him* {Romans. 5:9}. He has *obtained eternal Redemption,* and made *Reconciliation and Peace by the Blood of his Cry*: Or by *giving, himself an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling Savour* {Colossians. 1:20}.

(2.) The other Branch of the Work of Christ as a Prier is, his making Intercession for us, which was typified by the Entrance of the High-Priest into the Sanctuary, with the Blood of those Beasts that were offered in Sacrifice, and sprinkling of it before the Mercy-Seat. Our blessed Lord *is not entered into the holy Places made with Hands, which were the Figures of the true*; *but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us* {Hebrews. 9:24}. He is a Priest *upon his Throne,* or in his exalted State, and *ever lives to make Intercession for us*. As Christ was our propitiatory Sacrifice, he is also *our Advocate with the Father*. And, as such he pleads our Cause, and will *thoroughly plead it*. For his Intercession is founded in Justice, and of Right he may expect to be heard and answered of the Father, in every Petition he presents to him in our Favor: Not only, as he has finished the whole of what

was required, that he should do and suffer, to obtain eternal Redemption for us; but also, as his Obedience and Sufferings are an Equivalent for the Justification of our Persons, our Deliverance from Punishment, and the Fruition of Blessedness, and, consequently, we may most assuredly conclude upon his Ability *to save to the uttermost,* from his *ever living* to intercede. His Intercession being founded on what he did and suffered while on Earth, it is limited to the Persons for whom he obeyed and suffered, who are the Elect of God. Hence the Apostle argues from the Intercession of Christ, the Security of the Chosen of God, without the least mention of any other: *Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? It is Christ that died*; *yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the Right-hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us* {Romans. 8:33-34}. Agreeably to this, our Lord when on the Earth, declared, that he prayed *not for the World*; but for those, *who were given to him by the Father* {John. 17:9}. And his Intercession in their Favor, as equal in Extent to the Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings for them.

What he merited, by obeying and dying, he has a proper Right to ask and his People may be certain that they shall receive. His Obedience to the Law merited their Justification, and all those Blessings of Grace and Glory, which are consequent upon their Justification before God, by the Imputation of his Righteousness. His Sufferings for them merited their Pardon, Peace, and eternal Redemption. And,

therefore, our Saviour may demand whatever is necessary to their Happiness, he accordingly does. *Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory* {John. 17:24. In Justice the Father cannot but communicate future Blessedness to them, since Christ may claim it for them on the Foot of Right, arising from his Obedience and Death.

2. Our Saviour is the great Prophet of the Church. *Moses* speaks of him under this Character: *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, like unto me, from the midst of thee, unto him shall ye hearken* {Deuteronomy. 18:15}. He is very fitly qualified for this Office: For he was *in the Bosom* of the *Father,* and acquainted with all the secret Purposes of his eternal Love and Wisdom, and he hath declared his *Name*: Or his Grace, Goodness, and Sovereign Favor, and all the wise Counsels and Actings thereof. When he was in this World, he published the Will and gracious Purposes of his Father about his People, and their Security and *certain* Happiness upon that solid Foundation, in many of his public Sermons, which will admit of the clearest and most easy Proof. Since his being in Heaven, he has *given some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers*; the three former were extraordinary Officers in the primitive Church, whose Business it was to convey to Men the Knowledge of the divine Will, and to form the Saints into Bodies or distinct Churches, and to give them Direction in all Things relating to the Glory of God, and their mutual Edification: The two latter are ordinary Ministers,

whose Work it is, to teach, feed, and guide Societies of *Christians* according to Rules prescribed in the New Testament for those Purposes. Besides, our blessed Redeemer sends his Spirit, to enlighten the Minds of his People, to comfort and guide them, in this State of Imperfection, Danger, and Difficulty. *The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him, enlightens the Eyes of their Understanding,* and enables them *to know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints {*Ephesians. 1:17-18}. This internal Revelation of divine Truths, is necessary to be super-added to the external Revelation of them in the Word, in order to an Acquaintance with the excellent Nature, Importance, and Glory of those Truths: *For the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, they are Foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*

(3.) Christ is the King, whom God *has set on his holy Hill of* Sion: And he *rules in Righteousness {*Psalms. 2:6; Isaiah. 22:1}. In this Character, he has conquered all the Enemies of his Church, Sin, Satan, the World and Death. In the Execution of this Office, he subdues the rebellious Hearts of his People, and makes them *willing* to submit to his Authority, as well as, to depend on his Grace, Blood, and Righteousness, *in the Day of his Power*. Again, he gives Laws to them, and demands a cheerful Obedience them to those Laws. Farther, he defends their Persons in all Dangers,

and preserves his Subjects safe, though the Number, Power, and Malice of their Enemies are great. Once more, he confers the highest Honor upon them: For he makes them Kings, appoints unto them a Kingdom, and gives them Crowns of the brightest and never declining Lustre and Glory.

Upon the whole, it is evident, that Christ in all his Offices, acts for the Good, Safety and Happiness of his People: Or, that the everlasting Salvation and eternal Felicity of the Church, is intended in the Mediation of Christ; and that it is effectually secured in the Execution of his priestly, prophetic, and kingly Offices, in Subordination to the Glory of the divine Persons and divine Perfections. Who that discerns the Importance and amazing Glory of this Constitution, and seriously considers how rich Grace, infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness, Truth and Faithfulness illustriously shine herein, to the Amazement of Angels, and the everlasting Joy and Rapture of the Saints, who I say can forbear saying as *Witsius* does?

These are the tremendous Mysteries of our holy Religion, kept secret in Ages part, but now made manifest by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the eternal God, published throughout all Nations for the Obedience of Faith. *Hence the Divinity of the Christian Religion is evidently clear. What Wisdom of Men, what Wisdom of Angels, could devise these Things, that are so deep, so sublime, and in so high a Degree exceed all the*

Understanding of all Creatures? How does the adorable Wisdom of God, Justice, Holiness, Truth, Goodness, Philanthropy, here display itself, in finding, appointing, and completing this Method of our Salvation? How calmly a Conscience pressed with the Burden of Sin, may rest in such a Surety, in such an Engagement? Here observing this Method of our Reconciliation, worthy of God, and safe and secure for Man. Who that contemplates these Things in the Light of the Spirit will not break forth into the Praise of the most holy, the most just, the most true, and the most high God? O! the Depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! *O! the Mysteries which* Angels desire to look into! *Glory be to the Father, who provided, admitted, gave such a Surety! Glory be to the Son, who clothing himself with human Flesh according to his Engagement and Promise, so freely, so patiently, and so courageously died for us! Glory be to the holy Spirit the Revealer, the Witness, and the Earnest of so great Happiness! Be thou exalted, O Christ Jesus, true and eternal God, true and holy Man, and both united, and the Properties of each Nature preserved in a Unity of Person. We confess thee, we worship thee, we apply ourselves to thee, at thy Feet we lay ourselves, from thy Hand only we expect Salvation, thou only Saviour. We desire to be thy peculiar Portion, and by thy Grace we are, and shall eternally remain. Let the whole World of thy Elect know thee, acknowledge thee with us, and so by thee be saved. This is the whole of Faith, this is the whole of Hope, this is the whole of our Desire,* Amen. Oecon. Foed. Lib. 2, Cap. 4.

I shall now attend to what Mr. *Foster* delivers on this most important and glorious Subject, which fills the Angels with Astonishment, engages their strictest Attention, and is an eternal Spring of Comfort, Joy, and blissful Delight to the Saints.

1. He asserts, *That this Constitution, is not a Scheme entirely new*; *but that it is closely connected and interwoven with the essential Branches of the Religion of Nature*. *

* Vol. 4 of Sermons, p. 392.

Answ. This is not true according to our Principles, nor his own. Upon our Principles it cannot be true, for natural Religion, knows nothing at all of a Saviour, nor of Salvation, by the Obedience and Sufferings, or Mediation of *Jesus Christ,* and, consequently, not of Acts, of Faith and Hope in him, nor of Love and Obedience to him: All which are founded on his Person, Mediatorial Engagements: and Acts, and those precious Benefits we receive from him, as our only Mediator and Saviour. It is false, even upon his own Principles; for his Opinion of the Mediatorial Scheme, is so far from being a Revival of the Religion of Nature, that it is as base and wretched Corruption of it. Natural Religion teaches us perfect Love to God, and our Neighbor; and that moral Imperfection is displeasing to him, and subjects us to his awful Anger. Mr. *Foster* maintains,, that God, according

to this Constitution, accepts, justifies, and rewards guilty Men, upon the Foundation of their own Works. — That he accepts of sincere Obedience, in the Room of perfect; which is not agreeable to the pure Religion of untainted Nature; but it certainly is a great Depravation of it. In divine Revelation, natural Religion is delineated, and let forth in all its Beauties; and it superadds the Christian Religion to that. This *Gentleman* denies almost every Branch of the latter, and he gives a deformed Representation of the former.

2. The Author complains much of this Doctrine having been *grossly* misrepresented. — *God,* says he, *considered in himself, has been described as an Object of Horror, and absolutely inaccessible by his frail offending Creatures*. *

* Page 395.

And he dares to pass this bold Censure on that Description of God. *An unnatural Imputation, and most absurdly blasphemous*. *

* Ibid.

This is a Home-thrust, ‘tis a daring Stroke. Let him see to it, how he will defend this *impious* Censure, in a certain Time to come. If it is not agreeable to the pure Nature of God, to approve of moral Impurity; it is no unnatural Imputation to describe him, as inaccessible by such as are the Subjects of moral Turpitude, in themselves considered. If it is an Act of

Justice in God to punish and drive from his most holy Presence, those who sin against him; it is not Blasphemy to assert, that an *offending* Creature, as so considered, or in himself, cannot with Safety appear before the divine Tribunal. And that it is a righteous Thing with God, to recompense Sin with Tribulation, a very short Time will convince this Person, and all other Men, who may doubt of it now. Thro' Ignorance, Self-Love, Pride and Prejudice, he and others, may at present flatter themselves, that an Appearance before the most holy, and the most high God, tho' they are Criminals, will not be attended with any Danger: But if they are not convinced of this Mistake, and *flee for Refuge* to the great Mediator, they will most certainly find it a dreadful, a fatal one. It would be infinitely less bold and presumptuous in a Rebel to insist upon at, that without Fear or Shame, he may approach the Presence of his Sovereign, tho' he has rebelled against his Crown and Dignity; than it is for sinful Men to stand upon it, that without Terror they may enter the Presence of the infinite Majesty of Heaven, notwithstanding their Rebellion against him. It is no Dishonor to God, to represent him as an Object of Dread and Terror to guilty Creatures; but it is a just Assertion of his eternal, infinite, and invariable Righteousness. He can't be just if he is not *a Terror to evil Doers,* as so considered.

He asks a very impertinent Question, and vainly flourishes and insults, as if he was militating against the most evident Absurdity. *Where,* says he, *can Access be had, if not to*

infinite Mercy? *

* Page 395.

Answ. It is to God, as infinitely merciful and gracious, that guilty Creatures must apply with Hopes of Acceptance, and the Communication of Favors to them. What is undeserved; free Mercy alone bestows on the deservedly miserable. This is freely granted. But if he had put a Query suitable to the Point in Hand, it must have been this: May not rebellious Creatures hope for Mercy, without any Provision for the Honor and maintaining the Rights of Justice? If he proves any Thing to the Purpose, he must prove this; that divine Mercy may exercise itself, in Favor of sinful Men, without any Method taken to answer the Demands of Justice. This he has not yet proved, nor will he ever be able to give Proof of it. That is a Principle he begs and takes for granted, without so much as the least Attempt to confirm it, either from Reason or Revelation. As to what he says of *Men shewing Mercy to Offenders*; *

* Page 396.

it is Weakness in them, not to be able to exercise Justice at the same Time, that they extend Mercy to Criminals. It is a Weakness attending human Nature, not to be capable of supporting the Rights of Justice, when they show Clemency towards the Guilty. Wisdom, if it was in their Power, would

always direct them to show Favor to Transgressors, in such a Way, as that the Authority and Sanction of their Laws might be fully established in doing it. But since that it is not in their Power, in all Cases, wherein Mercy is extended to Offenders; they are obliged to act differently to what the Laws in Force direct, however just and equitable they are. Seeing it is the wisest Way, so to exercise Mercy, as at the same Time to maintain the Rights of Justice; it is reasonable to conclude, that God who is infinitely wise and just, will never be merciful to his guilty Creatures, but in such a Way, as that Justice shall not be obliged to give up any Part of its Right, or its Glory be in the least veil'd; and that he is capable of being clement and favorable to Offenders, in such a Way, tho' Men are not. He adds, *Or if the supreme Being be, in particular Cases, averse to all Commiseration*; *dare any inferior Being presume to intercede as a Mediator? To dictate Mercy to him, that it all-perfect*; *to attempt to make more compilable, to sooth, and mollify him into greater Benignity and Indulgence? If God be in himself, an unchangeable and unerring Pattern of every Thing that is right and fit*; *would not such a Mediator act an indecent, nay, an immoral Part? Would he not behave in a Manner unbecoming an intelligent Being, if he should sue for Mercy, any farther than God is by Nature merciful?* *

* Page 396.

Answ. 1. If God was averse to all Commiseration, a Mediator

would never have been provided. It was free Mercy, Goodness and Grace, that appointed Christ Mediator; to the End that Mercy might be glorified consistent with Justice, in the Pardon and Salvation of sinful Men. 2. Our Saviour in his Intercession, does not intreat God to be more merciful and kind, than it is agreeable to his most merciful Nature to be, towards his guilty Creatures, in a Way of Justice. And since Christ became Mediator and Intercessor, as an Effect of divine Love and Goodness; it is not thought, that God is prevailed with, in Consequence of his Intercession, to shew Mercy, not having before a Disposition to exercise it. And, therefore, Mr. *Foster,* after his usual Manner, trifles most egregiously. 3. The Intercession of our blessed Lord, being founded on the Perfection of his Satisfaction; he asks for no larger and more extensive Exercise of Mercy, than consists with Justice; and, consequently, in his

Intercession, he acts no indecent and immoral Part; nor in a Manner unbecoming an intelligent Being. Nothing farther is asked of God, than he is inclined to bestow; and he is not desired to communicate his Favors, in a Way unsuitable to his own Perfections. And, therefore, our Advocate in pleading for us, fully supports his Character of righteous. *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous* {1John. 2:1}. *On the contrary, if any Circumstances could be supposed, in which the supreme Model of every Thing truly worthy and noble, might be imagines to be, essentially considered unpropitious and*

inaccessible; *is at not undeniably certain, that the Mediator also ought to be inaccessible? Or can the Deity be degraded by the Exercise of Compassion, in the very same Case, in which the Mediator is exalted and dignified, by pleading for Compassion?* *

* Page 396, 397.

Answ. Tho' God is inaccessible by guilty Creatures, without a Satisfaction given to his Law and Justice for their Offenses; yet upon the Ground of the Satisfaction of Christ, he not only may, but he certainly will admit Sinners into his glorious Presence, and receive them to himself; for Justice itself directs to this merciful, kind and gracious acting towards them upon that Foundation. And, therefore, the Mediator may be addressed with Boldness and Freedom, by those for whose Sins he made Atonement, and the Father also may thro' him: *We have Boldness and Access with Confidence by the Faith of him* {Ephesians. 3:12}. Again, God is not degraded by shewing Compassion, consistent with Justice: None suppose that he is: Nor does the Mediator petition him to be kind to Sinners, at the Expense of his Righteousness. It would be a great Dishonor to our gracious and merciful Intercessor to imagine he does. Our Author concludes his negative Account of this Matter with saying, *must not our humble Supplications, even when they are offered thro' a Mediator, be ultimately presented to the divine Mercy? If so, it then necessarily follows, that the true Ground on which the*

Mediatorial Scheme was established, could not be, that God was in himself, either too terrible, or too resentful, or too inexorable, to be directly addressed and invocated. *

* Page 397.

Answ. Prayer is directed to divine Mercy, as exercising itself on the Foundation of Christ's Atonement and Satisfaction; and, therefore, in a Way consistent with Justice. But God cannot be invocated by a Sinner, out of Christ, with any solid Hope of being heard, accepted and answered. Yet it is not the Mediation of Christ, that causes a Will in God to be kind and favorable to his People. The Constitution of Christ a Mediator, is the gracious Effect of an eternal Purpose in God, to shew Mercy to Sinners; and supposes a Will in him to save them, *prior* in Order of Nature to that Appointment. But the Mediation of Christ is the only Way, wherein Justice as well as Mercy can be exercised in their Recovery; which it became the infinite Wisdom of God to provide for the Vindication of, in this great Affair. And, therefore, tho' the Death of Christ did not procure a Will in God, to be reconciled to Sinners; yet, since he cannot without neglecting the Rights of his Justice treat them in a merciful Manner, except upon the Foundation of the Propitiation of Christ; it evidently follows, that God cannot be addressed and invocated by Transgressors out of him, to his own Glory, and their everlasting Peace and Happiness. Mr. *Foster* proceeds, positively, to give us an Account of his Opinion, in Relation

to this momentous Subject. And, he says thus, *The true Christian Doctrine of a Mediator, the Substance of which is*; *that our blessed Saviour was appointed by the supreme Authority of Heaven and Earth, to reconcile apostate and rebellious Men* (these are harsh Terms, but we don't often meet with them) *to their offended* (another hard Word) *Maker and Sovereign*; *and to be the Distributor of God's Favors to Mankind*. *

* Page 397.

Then he observes, *that it is probable, that Christ did not stand in the Character of a Mediator, till after his Exaltation,* (which is a *Socinian* Tenet,) and several Things to clear up this Appointment from some Objections, wherewith we have no Concern at present: Next he explains what is intended by ascribing Reconciliation and Remission to the Death of Christ: And says, *that it is the undeniable Doctrine of the new Testament, that the Death of Christ, was not intended to render the Deity propitious*: *

* Page 397.

None suppose it was, which I have before observed. — *The whole Use and Efficacy of it,* adds he, *springs from his appointing and declaring it to be an accepted Sacrifice*. *

* Page 401.

If it as so, then the Death of Christ in its own Nature, had nothing of a Fitness in it to atone for Sin: It was merely an arbitrary Act in God to appoint it to such a Use. It was not then in Reality a Sacrifice, or it was not so in itself, only God accepted it as such. Than which two Particulars the *Gentleman* will never be able to express any Thing more false, and contradictory to the current Sense of the new Testament. Those Writings tell us, that Christ *is sacrificed for us* {1Corinthians. 5:7}. — That he *gave himself for us an Offering and a Sacrifice* {Ephesians. 5:2}. That he *put away Sin, by the Sacrifice of himself* {Hebrews. 9:26}. These Testimonies Mr. *Foster* contradicts, and confidently asserts, that it was no otherwise a Sacrifice, than by Acceptation. How trifling therefore is it, yea how absurd to observe, as he does, *that it is the express Command of God, to consider the Death of Christ, under the Notion of a Sacrifice*. *

* Page 402.

What? Are we commanded by God to consider, or account the Death of his Son to be that which in Fact it was not? A Sacrifice it seems his Death was not; but we are required by God himself to consider it a Sacrifice: This is ridiculous trifling indeed with sacred Things. Three Reasons are assigned for our accounting, by Virtue of divine Authority, the Death of Christ to be what it was not. 1. *That it might be a standing Memorial of God's being propitious, and inclined to pardon the Sins of Men — a Memorial coinciding with the*

almost universal Sentiment and Practice of the World (*among whom Sacrifices were esteemed as an essential Part of Religion and likely, upon that Account to have a more certain and powerful Influence*. *

* Page 402.

Answ. What Fitness was there in the Death of Christ to be such a standing Memorial? None at all according to our Author's Opinion; it became so by a mere arbitrary Act of God, who would have Men consider it under the Notion of a Sacrifice, tho' it was not a Sacrifice. Again, the Death of Christ procured the Pardon of Sin in a Way honorable to the Law and Justice of God; and *in him we have Redemption thro' his Blood the Forgiveness of Sins*. Hence we read of his *purging our Sins,* and *putting away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*. And, therefore, it is sinking the Death of our glorious Lord, to serve a very low Purpose, *viz*. to be a Memorial only of an Inclination in God to pardon Sin. Besides, would God meet with the Superstition and Prejudices of the World, who almost universally thought Sacrifices necessary to appease the offended Deity? Or in Compliance to this foolish Prejudice of Mankind, would he have the Death of his Son considered as a Sacrifice, tho' it was not so in Fact? Abominable, shocking and horrid is this! Was it becoming the Wisdom of God, so far to countenance the superstitious Fears and absurd Prejudices of foolish Men, (so Mr. *Foster* speaks) who thought that Sin could not be

pardoned without Atonement? Was not this the ready Way to encourage them to retain that Prejudice to the Dishonor of the merciful Nature of God, who is disposed and determined, (as our Author thinks) to remit Sin without any Satisfaction made to his Law or Justice? Farther, this seems to suppose, that if Men had not fallen into the absurd Opinion, of the Necessity of Sacrifices, we should never have been commanded by God, to consider the Death of his Son, as a Sacrifice. If it is true, that for this Reason, we are required to esteem the Death of Christ what it was not in Fact; the whole Gospel is a mere Fable, and unworthy of the Regard of Men.
2. *That it might be a standing Memorial of the Evil and Demerit of Sin*. *

* Page 402.

Answ. How comes it to be such a Memorial? Was there any Fitness in it to be such a Memorial, or to serve such an important End? No, it was merely an arbitrary Act in God, to appoint it such a Memorial. If Sin had been said on Christ, if he had suffered in the Room of Sinners, if in suffering he had been made a Curse, an Offering for Sin; his Death in itself would have been a full Evidence of the evil Nature and dreadful Demerit of Sin, and it eternally would be a fit Memorial of the vile Nature of it, and of the Punishment it deserves. Each of these Things is affirmed in the holy Scriptures; but neither of them Mr. *Foster* thinks is true.

3. *It seems to have been wisely appointed with this View likewise, viz. to supersede the Use of all future Sacrifices*; *which extending even to human Sacrifices, had been the most depraved and unnatural Branch of heathen Superstition*. *

* Page 403.

Answ. The Doctrine of the Necessity of the Death of Christ, who was a Person infinitely glorious, in order to expiate Sin, and make Atonement for it, greatly exposes the Folly of Mankind, in proposing to appease the Wrath of God by any Thing, which it was in their Power to offer to him in Sacrifice. Again, the Account given in the Gospel, that Peace is made by the Blood of Jesus, is a proper Foundation for Tranquility of Mind, and inward Satisfaction and Joy, tho' we are conscious of Guilt and great Unworthiness: And hence we clearly discern, that God as a righteous Judge requires nothing of us, in Order to Atonement for our Sins, and the Remission of them. That Christ, *by one Offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified* {Hebrews. 10:14}. This Scripture the Author dreadfully abuses, when he says, and, *therefore, that it, i.e.* the Death of Christ, *might the better produce this Effect, viz.* superseding the Use of all Sacrifices; particularly, human Sacrifices, *which was worthy the Case of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, we are expressly informed, that Jesus Christ* hath by one Offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The Sense according to Mr. *Foster* is this, the Death of Christ, tho' it was not in fact a

Sacrifice, yet since Men, through a superstitious Dread of the divine Anger against Sin, have been persuaded of the Necessity of Sacrifices, they shall consider his Death, as a Sacrifice, that they may not hereafter imagine, that any other Sacrifice, for Sin is expected of them. In the last Place, he compares the Sin of *Adam* and its Consequences to his Posterity, with the Death of Christ, and its Effects relating to Mankind; and very wonderful are the Discoveries he makes on these Subjects. 1. He observes, *That Death is a Misfortune, not a Punishment, to which the human Race became subject in Consequence of the Sin of* Adam. *

* Page 404.

Answ. Without Guilt none are subject to Death; if any are so, then Death is not the Wages of Sin, nor does it follow upon the Imputation of it; but in some Instances at least, it is inflicted without any Charge of Sin at all. Both which are false: The Apostle expressly asserts, that *the Wages of Sin is Death* {Romans. 6:23}. And he plainly supposes, that Sin is imputed to such as die, and that the Imputation of Sin is the Cause of their dying, when he thus expresses himself: *Sin is not imputed where there is no Law*: *Nevertheless Death reigned from* Adam *to* Moses, *even over them that had not sinned after the Similitude of* Adam's *Transgression* {Romans. 5:13-14}. Again, the Loss which any innocent Person may sustain, in Consequence of another's Guilt is not of any Thing, which Innocency entities to, because it is

unjust to deprive a guiltless Man of what his Innocency gives him a proper Right to. The Children of a Traitor suffer Loss, in Consequence of their Father's Rebellion; but not of any Thing which Innocency entitles them to; their Right to their Father's Estate follows upon his Right; the Father not preserving that Right in himself, by due Subjection and Loyalty to his Prince, he cannot convey it to his Descendants. Innocency, according to the Constitution of God in his Law, entitled *Adam* to Life; so long as he continued innocent, so long he was free from an Obnoxiousness to Death. And that Law which gave him the Head and Root, a Right to Life, on Condition of preserving his Innocency, could not subject his Descendants to Death, without a Concern in his Guilt.

For it is absurd to suppose, that one and the same Law, should ensure Life to the first Man, if he did not offend his Maker, and bring all his Posterity under a Sentence of Death, considered as innocent; and, consequently, since all Mankind are liable to Death, as an Effect of the first Man's Sin, the human Race must be chargeable with his Transgression, in the Sense of that Constitution and Law. So that Death is not a Misfortune only, but it is a Punishment in itself, and such it remains to all, who are not redeem'd by Jesus Christ, 2. *This Misfortune brought upon us by the Sin of* Adam, *is counterbalanced thro'* Jesus Christ — *by restoring Mankind to a Possibility of obtaining eternal Life*. *

* Page 404.

Answ. Will it be allowed, that the Sin of *Adam* brought us into any Danger of losing eternal Life? If this is granted, we shall have more yielded, than we expected from this Person; tho' the Manner of his speaking does suppose it, yea, that it was lost; for that cannot be said to be restored, which is not taken away, or lost by some Means or other. But those for whom Christ died, or acts in the Capacity of a Mediator; are not only brought into a possible State of Salvation; but they are actually, completely, and eternally saved. He has put away their Sins; redeemed them from the Law's Curse; justifies their Persons; gives them a Right to Heaven; prepares them for the Enjoyment of celestial Glory; preserves them fife in this World; and will render them consummately happy in the next. Farther, the Author, I suppose, means that God for the Sake of Christ will justify and reward Men with eternal Life, on the Foundation of their own imperfect Obedience, which is false, and it has been before disproved. 3. Mr. Foster apprehends, that the Things advanced are *a proper Explanation of* {Romans. 5:15, 18,21}. But he is grossly mistaken: For the Things advanced are not true; and, therefore, they cannot be a proper Explanation of that, nor of any other Part of sacred Writ. Besides, the Death of Christ is not there treated of; not a Word relating to it is mentioned in that Place. The Apostle in that Portion of Scripture, limits his Discourse to the Disobedience of *Adam,* and its Effects upon us; and to the

Obedience of Christ, and the happy Fruits arising to us, from the Imputation of that Obedience, and our being justified thereby.

Nothing at all is said of his Death and Sacrifice; and, therefore, this Observation is impertinent; it neither serves to explain that Place, nor to confirm what he wishes to establish. 4. *His Death may be much more properly described as a Sacrifice, than any Offering of brute Creatures*; *which had no such Efficacy, viz*. to render the obtaining of eternal Life possible to Men. ***Answ.*** According to him, the Death of Christ, in itself, hath no such Efficacy, any more than they had. All the Efficacy spoken of, and that is not much, is of the Appointment of God; or it is the Effect of his arbitrary Pleasure; which is not only false, but absurd, as it seems to me. What Actions are in their own Nature, that they will for ever remain, no Appointment can alter them: And the Actions of an intelligent Being, cannot be attended with greater Worth and Efficacy, than is proper to the Nature of the Acts of such a Creature, by Virtue of any Appointment or Decree whatsoever. If, therefore, the Death of Christ, was not a proper Sacrifice, if it had not in itself, or in its own Nature, Efficacy to take away Sin, atone for it, and save Sinners, no Appointment could make it a Sacrifice, nor give Efficacy to it. 'Tis one Thing to say, that something is accepted in the room of another; and quite different to affirm, that the Thing so accepted, becomes and may be esteemed that very Thing which it is accepted in the Stead of. And to

assert, that the Death of Christ, is to be considered under the Notion and Character of a Sacrifice, tho' it was not such, because God accepts it in the Room of a Sacrifice, is advancing a direct Absurdity. And the Death of Christ cannot properly be called a Sacrifice, or an Offering for Sin, without an Imputation of Sin to him, unless he bore the Curse it subjects us to, and underwent the Penalty that Sin demerits; all which Mr. *Foster* denies: And, therefore, tho' he proceeds to say, *that the Phrases of our being redeemed by his Blood, and reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, must appear to have a clear and very emphatical Meaning*; they can have no such Meaning, that is agreeable to the Idea of Redemption, and Reconciliation, by the Offering of Sacrifice. It is mere trifling, to speak of the Death of Christ under sacrificial Terms; and explain away the Idea of a Sacrifice in Relation to his Death. How can it be a Sacrifice for Sin, without Atonement; without Reconciliation, and the Security of those Persons from Wrath and Punishment, on whose Account he became a Sin-offering? It is as rational to consider and esteem our Saviour a King, without his exercising any regal Power and Authority, as it is to consider him a Sacrifice in his Death, without his being made Sin and a Curse. I have considered what Mr. *Foster* objects to our Opinions; and what he offers in the Explication and Defense of his own, on various Subjects: And I hope, that our Sentiments are fully cleared of those Absurdities he imputes to them; and that the pernicious and dangerous Principles he advances, are sufficiently exposed and refuted. But that I

leave with the Reader to determine, as he shall see Reason upon due Examination.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A CALVINIST, A SOCINIAN, AN ARMINIAN, A BAXTERIAN, AND A DEIST.

FIVE *Gentlemen* of some Learning, and Ingenuity, happened to meet together, at a Friend's House in the Country; which was very agreeably situated; it was erected on a fine Soil, in a good Air, and on rising Ground; within View of it were lofty Hills; and between them were extraordinary fruitful Valleys; so that the Prospect it afforded was charming and delightful. And what rendered it still more agreeable was, it had a large Garden, laid out in the most elegant. Manner; which abounded with Fruit trees of the best Sorts, curious Plants, and a great Variety of the finest, and most fragrant Flowers. In it were shady Walks, that led up to a pleasant Summer-House, built on an Eminence; by which Advantage, you at once saw the Beauties of Nature, that displayed themselves all around, and the Skill of the *Gardener* in fitly placing the whole of his beauteous Charge.

And before it, was a Canal replenished with Water, clear as Chrystal. The *Gentlemen* finding themselves thus surrounded with Delights, each congratulated their common Friend, who enjoyed the Pleasures of Life, in a Degree sufficient to satisfy any Mind, which hath Limits to its Ambition. He on his Part,

entertained them in a Manner suitable to his Circumstances, Generosity, and Politeness. As his Fortune was large, his Disposition was generous, and his Deportment genteel and polite. They frequently retired to the Summer-House, not only for the Sake of that Pleasure, which arose from the many entertaining Objects they there beheld, but also for free and uninterrupted Conversation.

Their Discourse often turned upon Subjects useful and instructive. Sometimes they conversed about the heavenly Bodies. And with Rapture they observed the large Number of the fixed Stars, and the different Magnitudes, vast Distances, and double Force of the primary and secondary Planets; by Virtue of which, they always move in their proper Spheres, without receding too far from their Centre. They discoursed of this terrestrial Globe; and with Admiration took Notice of its fit Distance from the Sun, by whose Rays it is enlightened, rendered fruitful, and suitable to be inhabited by the Varlet of Creatures, wherewith it is plentifully furnished; that in particular, it is very commodious for the Residence of Man, who is far the most noble of all its Inhabitants. — That it is not placed so near the Sun, that prodigious and amazing Ball of Fire, as to be scorched by its Heat; nor so distant from it, as to be frozen by extreme Cold, thro' the Want of its warming Rays. — That by its diurnal Motion, we enjoy the great Advantage of Day and Night, the former for Labour, and the latter for Sleep; in order to refresh and recruit our animal Spirits, which we spend by Exercise in the Day. —

That by the annual Motion of the Earth, whereon we dwell, we have the great Benefit of the different Seasons of the Year, *viz*. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter: With a Pleasure not to be expressed, they observed its different Countries, divided from one another by the Seas, and by great Mountains and Ridges of Hills, — the vast Variety of Commodities, which the several Parts of the World produce, and the Conveniency of the Sea for Navigation, whereby the Inhabitants of very distant Places, have Opportunity of maintaining Correspondence, carrying on Trade, and furnishing one another with the Curiosities each Country affords, and that with Ease, which it can hardly be thought could be done in any other Way. They searched into the Bowels of the Earth, and found an immense Treasure in it; Gold, Sliver, Tin, Lead and Iron, besides precious Stones in Abundance. They considered the great Variety of Animals in the Sea, and on the Land, which are intended for the Food, Service, and Pleasure of Man. They took a View with Wonder of its towering Mountains, pleasant Dales, beneficial Rivers, purling Streams, and useful Springs, that rise and constantly flow, which are very ornamental, and exceedingly advantageous. And then with Astonishment they observed, that this Globe, filled with Wonders as it is, was designed for the Habitation of Man, and that all its Delights were intended for his Entertainment, and its Treasures for his Use.

This led them to discourse of human Nature, and to enquire what Man is, that he should be the Object of so munificent a

Case of the Almighty, and infinitely wise Author of all Things. They first entered into a Discourse of the human Body; and were struck with Amazement, at the Consideration of the Wisdom and Power, which conspicuously appear in the Formation of it. That curious Machine raised their Wonder, and filled them with Pleasure; which confirms of Solids and Fluids, of various Members, that are mutually subservient, and each necessary to the Good of the whole Frame. But they did not stop here; for they proceeded to converse of the human Soul, or thinking Power of Man; which renders him capable of discerning the divine Art, that shines so brightly in all the Works of God. And upon a nice Examination of the Properties of Matter, *viz*. its Solidity, Divisibility, *etc*. they plainly saw that Thought and Consciousness must necessarily be at a great Remove from Matter, let it be modified in what Manner soever: And, therefore, they concluded upon the Soul of Man being immaterial; and, consequently, immortal, or not subject to Corruption and Death, as his Body is, either from inward Disorder, or outward Violence.

Hence, the *Gentlemen* took Occasion to talk on religious Subjects: Of Man's Obligation to love, adore, and obey his Maker; of his Happiness, which consists in a Conformity to the Law, and in the Fruition of God, who is the Origin of all Blessedness. Their Sentiments of religious Principles were very different; which they quickly discovered. One was a *Calvinist*; one a *Socinian*; one an *Arminian*; one a *Baxterian*;

and the other was a *Deist*. They agreed to enter into a free and friendly Debate on such Subjects, as they had different Apprehensions about; and to allow each other, full Liberty to raise his Objections, to what might be advanced: only observing the Rules of Decency, which sometimes are too much neglected in Controversies.

I shall give an Account of what each *Gentleman* said, in Favor of his own Opinions, and in Answer to those Objections, which an the Conversation were urged against them, by the others. The Reader is desired to observe, that *C*. stands for the *Calvinist*; *S*. for the *Socinian*; *A*. for the *Arminian*; *B*. for the *Baxterian*; and *D*. for the *Deist*.

The *Deist* denying Revelation, the others thought it would be proper to endeavor to convince him of the Truth of that, before the Debate began; because he could not otherwise bear a Part in, nor receive any Advantage from the Conversation, which was intended for the Benefit of each; and in this good Work, the four were inclined to unite. ***D*.** perceiving the Difficulty that attended on his Part, and their Disposition to remove it, thanked them for that good Will they bore to him; but informed them, that they were mistaken, if they thought, that they could convince him of the Truth of Revelation, by any external Evidences, they had to urge in its Favor; because some absurd Principles, which are embraced by some Christians, and as he understood by one in Company, *viz*. ***C*.** he was persuaded, so far at least, as

he was acquainted with them, that they really are contained in the Bible; and that because they appeared absurd to him, he rejected the Scripture; thinking, that no external Evidence ought so far to weigh with him, as to work him up to an Opinion of the sacred Authority of a Book, which abounded with direct and manifest Absurdities.

Upon this frank Declaration, ***S.***, ***A.*** and ***B.*** united with ***D.*** in desiring ***C.*** to declare his Sentiments, which they must censure as absurd, they freely own'd, as well as ***D.*** 'till they should see, whether he was able to clear them of that Absurdity, which they apprehended did attend them. ***C.*** readily complied to open the Conversation, by declaring his Opinions; and he did so, with that Modesty which became himself, and with that Solemnity and Seriousness, which the Sublimity, the Depth, and the Importance of the Things he mentioned, called for ***C.*** expressed himself thus, in delivering his Sentiments. *Gentlemen,* I have been much delighted with the Discoveries we have made of the infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, in his Works. Since it evidently appears, that there is no Disorder or Defect in the natural, it cannot be reasonably thought, that there was originally any Disorder in the moral World. All intelligent Beings must have been formed perfect and absolutely free from any Defect, by the great God. If, therefore, human Nature is now attended with the least Blemish in its intellectual Faculties; Man was once entirely clear of that moral Disorder; and Reason dictates, that he brought it upon

himself, by violating the Law of God. For until an understanding Being errs from his Duty, he cannot be the Subject of vicious Habits: Corrupt Principles only can follow upon the Commission of Sin. And, consequently, if it is allowed, that Men universally are imperfect, human Nature is not now such, as it was created of God, and Man must have sinned against his Maker. Farther, Sir, certainly subjects the intelligent Creature to Death and Misery. God might, if he pleased, Justice directs to it, punish all his offending Creatures; he is not under the least Obligation to provide for the Recovery and Happiness of those, who have destroyed themselves by a sinful Behavior; and therefore, he may either save them in a Way becoming his own Perfections, or punish them according to their Desert, as he shall see fit to determine of his free and sovereign Will. If God is pleased to save some, and suffer others to perish; as those, whom he saves, had no Claim upon him to show them Favor; so those, whom he punishes, have no Cause of just Complaint against him, for the Penalty he inflicts upon them. My Opinion is, that God eternally bore good Will and Favor to some of the human Race; and that as the *mere* Effect of his unmerited Love, he chose them to Salvation, and in Wisdom resolved to execute this gracious Decree in a Way becoming all his Perfections. To this End he constituted Christ their Mediator, and Head, he became their Surety and engaged to do, and suffer for them whatever Law and Justice demanded. Pursuant to this his voluntary Engagement, he took their Nature into Union with himself, became subject to the Law,

obeyed it for them, and suffered its Curse, and sustained the whole Punishment due, on Account of their Sins, whereby he redeemed them from Condemnation and Death, justifies their Persons, and gives them a Right to eternal Life. On this Foundation, the holy Spirit regenerates, sanctifies, comforts, and preserves them safe in this World of Sin, Temptations, and Snares: So that their final Happiness is certain and infallible. Others are left to sink under that Weight of Guilt, which they are justly chargeable with, and that heavy Load of divine Vengeance thereby demerited. Christ was not appointed a Saviour to them. These are my Sentiments, wherein I can discover no Absurdity; and am persuaded, that neither of you will ever be able to prove, that there is the least Absurdity in them. Permit me, *Gentlemen,* to mention some few of those numerous Texts, by which these Set of Thoughts are, as I apprehend, fully supported.

I have said, that human Nature, in its original State, was perfect and free from any Defect or Disorder; this is doubtless true; for *God made Man upright {*Ecclesiastes. 7:29}. — That the present Disorder of our intellectual Powers, or the Depravity of our Minds, is the Consequence of Sin; if the former is true, this must necessarily be so. — That Sin subjects us to Death and Misery, according to the righteous Constitution of God in his Law: This, I think, is clearly and abundantly proved, by many express divine Testimonies to that Purpose. *The wages of Sin is Death {*Romans. 6:23}. *By one Man Sin entered into the World, and*

Death by Sin {Romans. 5:12}. *By the Offense of one many be dead* {Romans. 5:15}. *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all Things, written in the Book of the Law to do them* {Galatians. 3:10}. *God is not unrighteous, that taketh Vengeance* {Romans. 3:5}. Hence, I conclude, that since all Mankind are Sinners, it would be just in God, to *recompense Tribulation* to every Individual of the human Race; and therefore, no Injury is done to those, who are punished for Sin, if effectual Provision is really made for the Salvation of some. — That such Provision is made for a certain Number of sinful Men, seems to me most evident from these Scriptures. *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the Foundation of the World, that we might be holy, and without Blame before him in Love. Having predestinated us to the Adoption of Children, by Jesus Christ to himself that we should be to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace, wherein, he hath made us accepted in the beloved* {Ephesians. 1:4, 5,6}. *We are bound to give Thanks unto God always for you, Brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God hath from the Beginning, chosen you to Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth* {2Thessalonians. 2:13}. *In whom we have Redemption thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace* {Ephesians. 1:7}. *Having made Peace by the Blood of his Cross* {Colossians. 1:20}. *Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us* {Galatians. 3:13}. *Being now justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath thro' him* {Romans. 5:9. *By the Obedience of*

one, shall many be made righteous {Romans. 5:19}. *Thy People shall be willing in the Day of thy Power* {Psalms. 110:3}. *But God, who is rich in Mercy, for the great Love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Trespasses and Sins, quickened us together with Christ. By Grace are ye saved, thro' Faith*; *that not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God*; *not of Works, lest any Man should boast. And ye are the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which he hath before ordained,* or before prepared, *that we should walk in them* {Ephesians. 2:4,5,8-9,10}. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace given us in Christ before the World began* {2Timothy. 1:9}. *My Sheep hear my Voice, I know them, they follow me, I give to them eternal Life, they shall never perish, none shall pluck them out of my Hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hand* {John. 10:27-28,29}. *And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly*; *and I pray God your whole Spirit, Soul and Body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it* {1Thessalonians. 5:23-24}. *Being confident of this very Thing, that he who hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Christ* {Philippians. 1:6}. *Altho' my House be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all Things and sure, this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, tho' be make it not to*

grow {2Samuel. 23:5}. *Moreover, whom be did predestinate, them he also called, and whom be called, them he also justified*; *and whom he justified, them he also glorified* {Romans. 8:30}. *And so all* Israel *shall be saved* {Romans. 11:26}. *The Election hath obtained it, and the Rest were blinded* {Romans. 11:7}. These Scriptures, *Gentlemen,* are a few of the many, wherein all the Branches of my Opinion, concerning the Salvation of some, and the Destruction of others, in Consequence of sin, are fully expressed. They are almost all of them plain Language; not metaphorical and figurative Modes of Speech. And they are such a Constellation of shining Evidences, to the important Truths, I have advanced, as will not be obscured, I persuade myself, by all the cloudy Objections, you may be disposed to raise, in order to darken that clear and strong Light, which they strike upon unprejudiced and impartial Minds, in Favor of my Sentiments. However, I am now ready to hear, what you have to object to my Opinions; and promise thoroughly to consider it; and will endeavor to give you such Answers, as may defend the Truths, I embrace, and convince you of your Mistakes, as far as I am able. ***S. A. B.*** were by no Means satisfied with the Principles ***C.*** had laid down, nor could be persuaded, that the Proofs he offered to support them, were sufficient to that Purpose; and each was forward to speak in Opposition to him. ***S.*** who thought ***C.*** was mistaken in almost every Particular, began the Attack with a firm Resolution to grant him no Principle to argue from, without

disputing it, and insisting upon clear and evident Proof of it. He began with a Denial of original Righteousness.

I. *I deny,* said he, *that* Adam *was just, before he had sinned*. This unexpected Denial of original Righteousness, seemed very strange to ***A.*** and ***B.*** as well as to ***C.*** But ***S.*** had his Reasons to assign for it, which he immediately urged; they were there: 1. Adam *was not impeccable*. 2. *It cannot be proved, that he had not acted against his Conscience, before he eat of the forbidden Fruit*; *or that he had Opportunity of sinning, before he committed that Act*. 3. *It appears from that Act, that Appetite and the Senses governed Reason* (in him) *that before, there was not a good Agreement between that and them*. *

* At vero si altero modo, probent *Adamum* ante illud Delictum nihilcontra propriam Conscientiam secisse, id quod certe nunquam probabunt. Concludamus igitur, *Adamum* etiam antequam mandatum illud Dei transgrederetur, revera justum non suisse, cum nec impeccabilis effet; nec ullam peccandi Occasionem habuisset. — Ex eo quod *Adamus* deliquit, appareat Appetitum ac Sensus Rationi dominatos suisse, nec bene inter hanc & illos antea convenisse, *Socin. Praelect. Theolog*. Cap. 3.

C. answered thus. 1. Righteousness doth not consist in Impeccability: Or a Creature may be holy and righteous, and yet not be immutably so. It is necessarily supposed in the Impeccability of a Creature, that he is righteous, in order of Nature, before he can be rendered unchangeably righteous. To be holy is one Thing, and to be unalterably holy is another, a farther Thing, *Adam* was pure in his Creation-State, tho' not above a Possibility of becoming impure. 2. That he did not act against his Conscience, before he eat of the forbidden Fruit, and that he might have so done is evident; for that Prohibition was not the whole of the Law, he stood obliged to obey; that was superadded to the eternal moral Law, which was inscribed on his Heart, or con-created with him: That Law he might have violated, tho' he had not eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Will any say, that if he had not loved and adored his Creator, he would not have acted against his Conscience? Surely none can so imagine. And since that is charged upon *Adam* as the Offense that subjected him to Death, we must conclude, that *that* was the first Offense he committed, unless, we can be so irrational, as to conceit, that if he had but forbore to have eat of that Fruit, he might have done any other unfit Action without involving himself in Guilt, and Misery. 3. With equal Truth it may be affirmed, that Reason in Man, was not pure in his first State, because he acted contrary to right Reason in transgressing the Law, as that, in that State, his Passions were not under the Government of Reason, because he indulged his Appetite, in what his in-corrupted Reason must dictate to

him, it would not be safe for him to do. 4. You, Sir, seem to apprehend, that the Will of Man in his primitive State, was inclined neither to Good nor Evil, but indifferent to both, which is absurd. For, not to have a Disposition to Good, and an Aversion to Evil, is a moral Defect. To discern what is good, and have no Inclination to it; and to know what is Evil and not dislike it, denote a Privation of Holiness, which can't be supposed to have attended Man in his original State, without a Reflection on the Holiness of his Creator. ***A.*** at first seemed to be much of the same Opinion with ***C.*** and approved of his Reasoning, in great Part, only, he took the Liberty, to call original Righteousness *supernatural and accidental*, *

* Supernaturale viro & accidentale Notitia Dei Rerumque ad Salutem aeternam pertinentium, & Voluntatis secundum illam Notitiam Rectitudo & Sanctitas. *Armin*. *Disputat*. *priv*. *Thetis*. 26.

which ***C.*** affirmed it was not; but connatural or concreated with *Adam*. But upon Farther Consideration, ***A.*** departed from the Sentiments of ***C.*** relating to this Point, and advanced an unaccountable Position: *viz*. *That the Law of Nature did not properly exercise the Office of a Law with A*dam, *which he might obey or not obey*; *but it was only a natural Instinct to do what is lawful*. *

* Lex naturae non proprie apud Adamum Legis Officium cui

Adamus obedire nut non obedire poterat. Sed Stimulus tantum fuit & Instinctus naturalis ad faciendum quod licitum erat. *Limborch. Teolog. Christ.* Lib. 2, Cap. 24, § 8.

How then said ***C.*** could Man be a free Agent, in doing what was good? Or how could his Service be reasonable Service, if he was influenced and acted by Instinct? Which Questions ***A.*** was not able to resolve. With this Exception only, which appeared unintelligible to ***C.*** ***A.*** entirely took up the Opinion of ***S.*** and borrowed all his Arguments of him, and his Answers to the Arguments of ***C.*** in Favor of his Sentiments, in Relation to this Matter. *

* Curcellaei *Instit. Religi. Christ. p.* 109, 10.

B. differed from ***S.*** and ***A.*** and plainly declared himself to be of the Mind of ***C.*** in this particular, and rejected the Principle of ***S.*** With some Degree of warm Resentment, though he was far enough from being of the Sentiments of ***C.*** in almost all other Things, which the Reader will be informed of hereafter. *

* Baxter, *Method. Theolog. Pars* 1, *p.* 355, 356.

II. ***S.*** said to ***C.*** Sir, when you assert, that Sin subjects Man to Death and Misery, I suppose, you mean, that corporal Death is the Consequence, or Punishment of Sin, as well as eternal Death. ***C.*** I do. ***S.*** That, I deny, and affirm, that Man was mortal before he had sinned. My Reasons for this Thought of

the Mortality of innocent Man, are these: 1. *The Procreation of Children was appointed of God the Creator, before Sin*; *but those who are immortal do not procreate Children,* {Luke. 20:35-36}. 2. *Man received Meats and Food. But Immortality gives no place to Meats and Food,* {1Corinthians. 6:13}. 3. *The first Man before Sin, had a natural, and therefore, a mortal Body,* {1Corinthians. 15:44-45}. 4. *The first Man before he had sinned, was earthly, and therefore he was mortal,* {1Corinthians. 15:47. 5}. Christ *removed all that is the penal Effect of Sin, he removed not Mortality, and therefore, that is not the penal Effect of Sin*. 6. *If Man had been immortal, there would have been no need of the Tree of Life*. 7. *Since all the efficient Causes of our natural Mortality, existed before the first Man had sinned, no less than afterwards, it necessarily must be, that the Effect of natural Mortality should exist, no less before than afterwards. These Arguments, said* S. *are more than sufficient, in my Opinion, to prove the Mortality of Man, before he transgressed against God*. *

* *Socin. Prelect. Tbeolog. Cap. 1.*

C. answered his Arguments in the same Order he mentioned them.

1. Though there will be no Procreation of Children in the Resurrection-State, that is no Proof of its being inconsistent with Immortality. Nor does the Text referred to, imply so

much. 2. Receiving of Food is not inconsistent with Immortality, for *Christ* after his Resurrection, eat with his Disciples, yet he was not mortal: And the Term *Belly use*d in {1Corinthians. 6:13}, intends the Use of it, or Nutrition, which will be needless hereafter, because Man will then live another kind of Life. 3. My Answer to your third Argument is this: *Natural* is not opposed to immortal; but to sp*iritual*. The Body of Man in his first State was immortal, though not spiritual. 4. The Body of *Adam,* though it was not in its own Nature immortal, yet it was rendered so by supernatural Gift. The Bodies of Men after the Resurrection will consist of Matter or Earth; but they will be made immortal. 5. *Christ hath destroyed Death as a Punishment for his People*. *

* Maccovi. Loci Com. *p*. 406, 407.

6. The Tree of Life was no more than a Symbol of Life on Condition of Man's Obedience. 7. No internal efficient Causes of Death existed, before *Adam* sinned, *viz*. Pain and Sickness, *etc*. And as to external Causes of Death, God is the Chief, and he had determined not to take away the Life of his innocent Creature, he willed his Continuance in Life on Condition of Obedience, and no other external Cause could effect his Death contrary to the divine Will. *A*. declared himself to be so far of Opinion with *S*. in this Matter, *that he thought Sin did not subject Man to Mortality*; *though it subjected him to Death*. *

* Curcellaei. ibid. *p*. 110, 111.

III. ***S.*** was highly displeased with what ***C.*** had expressed of an eternal immutable Election of some Men to everlasting Life, and of their Sanctification, and certain Salvation, in Consequence of the divine Choice of them. He objected, as follows: 1. *If that were true,* said he, *all Religion would be torn up by the Roots, because it evidently follows, that whatever belongs to Piety is by Necessity*. *

* Socin. Praelect. Theolog, Cap. 6.

C. Though God effectually operates upon those, whom he has chosen to Salvation, and infallibly determines their Will to choose Holiness, yet they freely choose it. His Operations destroy not the natural Freedom of the Will, by infallibly directing it to make a wise Choice, and, therefore, there is no Force in this Objection. ***S.*** I farther object: 2. *If this Opinion is admitted four Things must be attributed to God, which I tremble to mention*: *viz*. *Injustice, Dissimulation joined with Deception, Folly, and Pravity*. ***C.*** Sir, you may well tremble when you express these *horrid* Things. But how will you prove, that my Opinion supposes either of them? *S*. I shall prove each in its Order. (1.) *It is plainly most unjust to punish any Man because he hath not done those Things, which he could by no Means do*. ***C.*** It would be so, if Man had not put it out of his Power by Sin: But since Man by a *Criminal*

Behavior, has disabled himself for the right Performance of his Duty, it is not unjust. (2.) *It is Dissimulation joined with Deception, for God has before decreed, that a great, yea the greater Part of those shall not be saved who hear the Gospel, yet he offers Salvation to all in the Preaching of it.* ***C.*** God doth not offer Salvation to all who hear the Gospel, it is tendered to those only, who are convinced of their Misery, and desire Salvation by *Christ*; and to them it is not *barely* offered; but it is also powerfully applied. (3.) *It is Folly, for it should seem God attempts that, which he well knows cannot be.* ***C.*** This is a Mistake, for God neither endeavors, nor seems to endeavor the Salvation of those, whom he hath *appointed to Wrath,* for Sin. (4.) *Pravity must be attributed to God, because he will be the Author of Sin. For if it is necessary, that whoever is condemned, should sin, certainly be who before he sins, hath appointed that any one shall inevitably be condemned, hath also decreed, that be shall certainly sin.* *

* Socin. ibid.

C. God decreed to condemn no Man but for Sin, or without the Consideration of Sin. And though Sin certainly follows upon God's Decree to permit it, his Decree to permit it gives not Being to it, and, therefore, he is not the Cause of it. ***A.*** declared his Approbation of the Objections of ***S.*** and made them his own. The first he enlarged upon more than *S.* had done, and urged it in a somewhat different Manner, *viz.* thus:

The Doctrine of absolute Predestination, tends to promote carnal Security in those who believe, that they are elected; *but in others who believe that they are of the Number of the Reprobate, Despair*; *which two things are the Pests of all Religion. For whereas Predestination is the Decree of God concerning the Salvation or Damnation of all Men. it must needs be, that all and every Man are included in the Number of the Elect, or Reprobate*: *And since the Decree of Predestination is so immutable, that an elect Person can by no Sin fall from the Grace of God, nor a reprobate Man, obtain Salvation, though he should do all the Works of the Saints*: *It must necessarily be according to the Genius and Nature of this Doctrine, that Security will arise in him who believes he is elected*; *but in him who believes he is reprobated, Despair*. *

* Limborch. *Theolog. Christ*. Lib. 4, Cap. 2.

C. Sir, I hope you are governed by better Principles, than this Way of arguing suggests, tho' you are pleased to reason after this fort. Shall a Man have no Concern for the Glory of God, because he is persuaded, that in infinite Goodness, he has rendered his Salvation and Happiness secure? Oh! vile Ingratitude: The worst of Impiety! Again, the Doctrine of Predestination is not of a discouraging Nature to any, who are seriously concerned about their future Welfare and Salvation, upon a Conviction of their Sins, sinfulness, and Misery; it is so far from that, that it is a solid Foundation of

Hope, Comfort, and Joy to such: For it secures Grace and Glory to them. Farther, if any Person can allow himself in Sin upon an Apprehension, that he is the Object of electing Love, it is an Evidence, that he knows nothing of the Power of divine Grace, that he is a most ungrateful Wretch, and that he has no Ground at all to conclude upon an Interest in the Grace of Election and the glorious Benefits, from thence arising. I add, if a Man, can content himself to continue in the Practice of Evil, because he fears that he is reprobated, or not chosen of God to eternal Salvation, that Man has no Reason to think, that he is one Degree better than the Devil is. For what is it, that his Conduct expresses, but this *devilish* Language: Since I am to perish for my Sins, I will go on to sin: What care I for the Honor of God? Or why should I fear to offend him? I will sin and let him punish me for it, as far as he can, and I shall be able to endure: Since I am not to be happy, it is the least of my Concern, how miserable, I shall be under the Vengeance of the Almighty. Oh! horrid Impiety. Oh! stupid Folly. Satan, himself don't transgress upon a worse Principle than this is. And, therefore, I wonder, Sir, that you are not ashamed to reason after this manner. Predestination or Election, is to Holiness, in order to future Happiness, {2Thessalonians. 2:13; 2Timothy. 1:9; Ro mans.8:19}. And, therefore, those who love not God, who hate not Sin, and who do not desire to forsake it, have no Foundation to believe, that they are the Objects of that gracious Decree. And such is the Sense good Men have of the Malignity of Sin, and of the intrinsic Excellence of

Holiness, that they are very desirous to avoid the former and practice the latter, even tho' Salvation is not to be secured by it. The Man who is not, has no solid Ground to hope for Heaven, whether this Doctrine is true or false. Let such a Man expect his Portion in Hell with Devils, upon whole *impious* Principles, he now dares to offend against God. He would not be in Heaven if he might, I am bold to say it. For he hath no Dislike to Sin, as Sin, nor Love to Holiness. 'Tis a mere Dream to imagine he hath. How therefore, can Heaven be a delightful Place to him, *where nothing enters that defiles?* Again; is it not *Madness* for a Person to dare to throw himself from a Precipice, because he knows, that he shall not break his Neck; but is sensible, that he will break his Bones by so acting, and bring such Pain upon himself, as it will be very difficult to endure with any Degree of Patience? You know, Sir, that *David* got *broken Bones* by Sin, tho' he did not bring eternal Destruction upon himself. A Man in his Wits would not venture upon that, which he is assured would cause him the acutest Pain, tho' it might not endanger his Life. ***D.*** Who had kept Silence 'till this Time, now spoke, and said to ***S.*** and ***A.*** *Gentlemen,* I have been of Opinion with you, that the Principles of ***C.*** are absurd and irrational; but I begin to think otherwise, and that he will be able to clear them of that Absurdity, which you and others have led me to impute to them. What he has observed of the evil Nature of Vice, and of the intrinsic Excellence of Virtue, brings to Mind what some Philosophers have expressed, *viz.* That Vice ought to be forsaken, because of its evil Nature;

and that Virtue's native Beauty, is sufficient to attract and charm the Mind. They seem to me to have reasoned on this Head in a far better Manner, than you and some other nominal Christians do, in opposing the Sentiments of ***C.*** tho' they had not the Advantage of Revelation, which you have. Upon this ***S.***, ***A.*** and ***B.*** declared to ***D.*** that it would be greatly pleasing to them, to find him thoroughly convinced of the Truth of Christianity; but cautioned him against being too forward of inclining to the Principles of ***C.*** which were pressed with many Difficulties not yet mentioned; he gave them Thanks for their very respectful Concern for his Welfare, and their Advice: which he promised to take. ***C.*** Desired him so to do, and said he would not have him or any other Man become his Proselyte, but upon a deliberate Enquiry, and a rational Conviction of the Truth of his Principles.

A. Proceeded in his Discourse, and started another Objection to the Doctrine of Election, *viz*. *That this Decree overthrows the Merit of Christ*. For said he, *if there is such a Decree, Christ did not merit Grace and Reconciliation, but Salvation*. *

* Limborch. Ibid.

C. answered thus. 1. You, Sir, do not, I think, allow that Christ procured the Love of God to Men, or a Will in him to save them, but maintain, that because God decreed to save them, therefore he sent his Son into the World to die for

them: Do you not? ***A.*** I do. ***C.*** 2. Then by Grace, I suppose, must be intended, not the Favor of God, but Benefits communicated to Men, which are Effects thereof. 3. These Christ by his Obedience and Death merited for all those, on whose Account, he obeyed and died. But this is a Point which will come under our Consideration hereafter; will it not? ***A.*** Yes. ***C.*** Then we will not enter upon that now. 4. I wish, that you in Reality maintained the Doctrine of Reconciliation by the Death of Christ. I think you do not. This we shall have Occasion to discourse of by and by, shall we not? ***A.*** We shall. ***C.*** Then we will not debate that Matter at present. 5. The Decree of Election, and the Merit of Christ, are perfectly consistent: For God did not purpose to save the Elect, without a Satisfaction given to his Law and Justice; and therefore, in this Decree, he appointed Christ to obey and suffer in order to that important End. ***B.*** *My Opinion is, that in Election, God purposed to give a larger Measure of Grace, to those who are the Objects of his Choice, than to others, whereby their Sanctification is certainly effected, and their Salvation secured. — That he determined to give that Grace to others, which renders their Salvation possible, tho' not certain.* *

* Baxter *Method. Christ.* Pars 1, cap. 2.

C. Sir, your Opinion is either to be supported, or not, as your Sentiments concerning the Nature of the divine Operations on the Souls of Men, may be proved, or not proved. And,

therefore, tho' I have many, Objections against it, and such, as I think, are very strong; yet it does not seem necessary to enter into a Debate with you at present about it. *B*. It is not needful now. ***C.,*** **A.*****, B.*** and ***D.*** asked ***S.*** if he had any Thing farther to offer on this Head of the divine Decrees relating to the Salvation of Men. He told them that he had, if they were disposed to hear it. They said, that they were ready to attend to what he had more to say. ***S.*** What I shall now advance, will not only affect the Sentiments of ***C.;*** but yours also, *A*. and *B*; and, therefore, I expect Opposition from each of you, and it may be, that ***D.*** himself, may be my Opponent in this Matter. What peculiar Thought can that be, which you suspect will be disagreeable to us all, said they to him? ***S.*** I confess it is novel; but that is no just Objection to it; it is this: *God doth not foreknow the free Actions of Men*. He plainly saw Confusion and Resentment in their Countenances, upon his asserting this; and therefore, he prepared himself for the Attack, he expected from them. They all censured this Principle as absurd, and seemed confident, that he could not support it. But ***S.*** doubted not of the Strength of his Arguments, and therefore, he mentioned them with an Air of Assurance, which indeed was common with him.

1. My first Argument is this: *The Fore-Knowledge* of God, relating to the Actions of Men destroys *human Liberty, and therefore it can't be true*. **C**. Tho' whatever is fore-known, will certainly be, yet the Freedom of the Agent in acting of that Thing is not destroyed: For the Will of the Agent acts

voluntarily therein. The Certainty and Contingency of Actions are not inconsistent, as Respect is had to God and to Man, relating to those Actions. — What is contingent to Man is not so to God. ***S.*** 2. *I deny that contingent Things are future*; *and they not being future, they cannot be foreknown of God*. ***C.*** Contingent Things are future; which I prove thus: Whatever is at any Time, it was eternally true, that it would be; and that it would be at the very Point of Time, and in the very Manner it is: Now if it was eternally true, that whatever is, would be; then it was future, or a Thing that certainly would be, at the Time, and in the Manner it is; and therefore, to deny God's Fore-Knowledge of the free Actions of Men, necessarily supposes him to be unacquainted with innumerable Branches of Truth, which is an absurd Supposition. For if he knows not the whole Compass of Truth, his Knowledge is limited and not infinite. ***S.*** 3. *Future Contingencies before they are, neither are future, nor are they not future*. *C*. It can't be true, that this Thing will be, and that it will not be; and therefore, it must always have been true, that *that* Thing would be, or that it would not be. If the Thing never is; it was eternally true, that it would not be; and if it is at all; it was everlastingly true, that it would be; and by Consequence, nothing can be contingent or uncertain whether it will be, or will not be, to God, who is acquainted with whatever is true; and therefore, tho' with Respect to Men, some Things are contingent, and not future; they are not so to the divine Being. The Doctrine of divine Prescience, receives undeniable Proof from many Predictions

of future Events, relating to the free Actions of Men, of an evil, and of a good Sort. ***S.*** *God knows whatever is future, or certainly will be*. ***C.*** If you assert, that those Actions of Men, of a bad, and of a good Nature, which have been foretold, were certain; you must say according to the Principle you advance and argue upon, that the Authors of those Actions, were involuntary in them, and that therefore they were not criminal, nor virtuous Actions, which is absurd. ***S.*** *God sees what is future, as it is conceived in the Hearts of Men*. ***C.*** 1. Many Predictions are delivered in the Scripture, of what Men would do, Centuries before they were born; what you have now said, therefore, cannot be applied to those Instances. 2. Suppose a Man wills to do a Thing now, he either is free, or he is not free to continue to will it; if he is not free to continue to will it, then he is under a Necessity in continuing to will it; if he is free to continue, or not continue to will it, then his continuing to will it, is contingent and not future; and therefore, according to your Opinion, it cannot be foreknown, whether a Man will continue, or not continue to will any one particular Thing. And, consequently, God, himself, cannot tell what a Man will do in any Instance, wherein his Will acts freely, not to say one Year, or one Month; but one Day before he doth it. ***S.*** There are four Rules by which we may judge of divine Predictions. 1. *If the Testimony speaks of good Works, certainly foreseen*; *doubtless God himself decreed them*. ***C.*** If those good Works certainly and infallibly follow upon the divine Decree, they are involuntary; according to your Opinion; and,

consequently, not virtuous. ***S.*** 2. *If it speaks either of good or of evil Works, it may be, that the Prediction is of Things very probable only*; *and for that Reason not certain, nor of that Fore-Knowledge, whereof we speak*. ***C.*** That is, you mean it is a Conjecture only. How can it comport with infinite Wisdom, to speak of Things as future, which are probable only, and may not be? If they are not, will not the Non-accomplishment of those Predictions, cause Men to scruple the divine Authority of the Scriptures? or to impute Folly to God, as being disposed to raise in the Minds of his Creatures, an Opinion of his Fore-Knowledge, upon uncertain Grounds, and by such Instances, as he may be and is mistaken in? ***S.*** 3. *It may be rather a Warning to avoid Evil, or to do Good*. ***C.*** The Prediction of an evil Action, may be considered as a Caution against it; but that is not any Objection to the Certainty of that Act being to be done; nor to God's foreknowing that it will be done. ***C.*** 4. *If it is a certain Prediction of an evil Work, the Work itself was decreed of God, but not the Malice of the Heart*. *

* Socin. *Praelect. Theolog*. cap. 10.

C. 1. Then that Work is not criminal; because, according to your Opinion, it is involuntary. 2. The Distinction between the Act, and the Malice of the Heart, I did not expect to hear from you, Sir. If God cannot foreknow voluntary Actions, then it will follow, either that Christ was not voluntary in his Obedience, or that God did not foreknow, that he would obey

his Will. ***S.*** *Christ's Obedience was necessary, and not free.*
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* Ibid. cap. 14.

C. This is certainly false; for, 1. Our Saviour most freely obeyed the Will of the Father in all Things; yea he took Delight in doing and suffering his Will. 2. Involuntary Obedience is nothing worth, because there is no Approbation of the Thing done, in the Mind of him that doth it, and he would not do it, if he could avoid it; and, therefore, Disobedience attends doing that Thing: Christ most certainly approved of what he did in Obedience to the Father's Will; if he had not, the Father could not have accepted his Obedience. If our Saviour had submitted to the Pleasure of God, as a Man submits to the Will of a Tyrant, whose Commands he has not Power to resist, his Submission could never have been pleating to him. 3. Hence it appears after all, that we must either maintain, that Necessity and Liberty are consistent, tho' we cannot explain how: Or we shall be obliged to assert, *Gentlemen,* with *S.* that Christ was *disobedient* in the Manner of doing the Will of God, shall we not? ***A. B.***

We cannot but grant, that your Reasoning is just, and your Conclusion true. ***D.*** Who diligently attended to what was expressed by ***S.*** and ***C.*** on this Subject, said to ***S.*** Sir, you seem to me to entertain more unworthy Notions of God, than we *Infidels* do; for we are persuaded, that he knows all Truth; and as ***C.*** has well argued, whatever is at any Time, it was

eternally true, that it would be; and, consequently, since you deny divine Prescience, you must maintain, that God is not acquainted with all Truth, — that he is daily improving in Knowledge and Experience, by observing the Conduct of his intelligent Creatures, which it is most irrational to think. Heathens, as you call them, have framed more worthy Conceptions of God than you do ***D.*** also said to ***A.*** and ***B.*** *Gentlemen,* the Concession, which you have now made to ***C.*** I doubt not but he will improve against you by and by. And how you wilt be able to withstand the Force of his Reasoning upon it, against some of your Principles, and in Favor of his own, I cannot divine. I am almost persuaded, that his Opinions are not absurd, tho' I have heretofore thought them so. In short, I am inclined to think, that I shall commence a Christian before this Conversation is ended. ***A.*** and ***B.*** renewed their Caution to ***D.*** not to be too hasty in forming his Judgment concerning the Principles of ***C.*** And said, that they had many Objections to his Opinion of Non-election or Reprobation, which they thought he could not answer. ***C.*** declared his Readiness to hear them; but desired, that ***A.*** would first express his Sentiments concerning Election, to which he consented.

A. My Opinion is, that God decreed to save all such, as believe in Christ, and persevere in Faith to the End of Life. *

* Limborch. *Theolog. Christ.* Lib. 4, cap. 1.

C. Did God certainly foreknow, that any would believe in Christ, and who they are? *A*. Yes he did; and foreseeing *that they would believe and persevere, he chose them to eternal Salvation*. *

* Ibid.

C. 1. Then Faith or Holiness is not a Fruit of Election; but it is the Cause or Reason why this or that Man is chosen, which is a Mistake: For Men are chosen to *Holiness* and *Sanctification,* and not because God foresaw that they would be holy. With as much Truth it might be said, that Men are chosen, because they are Subjects of Glorification, as that because they are Subjects of Holiness. The present Holiness of the Saints, which is the Beginning of everlasting Life, is as much and as truly the Result of God's eternal Love to, and of his free Choice of their Persons, as future Glory is, which is the Completion of Grace in their Hearts, and springs from his free Favor and gratuitous Election of them in Christ {2Thessalonians. 2:13}. 2. If this is true, Election is of Works, which it is not. 3. It cannot then be of Grace, which it most certainly is {Romans. 11:6. 4}. This supposes, that God loves all Men, and intends the same Good to all, which is not true; for he makes not the same Discoveries to all Men, nor operates upon all, in the same Manner. 5. Then those who are elected, make themselves to differ: Or they render themselves by their own Choice, the fit Objects of God's Choice, which is false. For *God works in them to will and to*

do of his good Pleasure {Philippians. 2:13}. *Faith is not of ourselves, it is the Gift of God* {Ephesians. 2:8}. 6. Your Opinion necessarily supposes, that Men for a Time may be pardoned and justified, that they may be the Sons of God, and *Joint-Heirs with Christ,* and yet not be glorified, but damned for ever which Things can't be true. 7. According to your Principle, it is impossible, that any Man can be assured of Salvation; or be confident, *that the good Work begun* in him, or in others, *will be performed until the Day of Christ* {Philippians. 1:6}. 8. Then a Man may lose his Interest in divine Favor, or *be separated from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus* {Romans. 8:37-38}; which I hope will never prove true. 9. A Person may then be in Union with Christ, and be rent from him, *be pluck out of his Hand, and out of his Father's Hand* {John. 10:27-28,29}. But neither of these can be, if our Saviour means, as he says, which I am persuaded he does. For these Reasons, and many others, I could mention, I cannot think, that your Opinion is true.

Now, *Gentlemen,* I will give you my Thoughts concerning Non-election, or Reprobation, if you please. ***S. A. B. D.*** do so. ***C.*** 1. I apprehend, that God willed to exercise his Justice in his Procedures towards some Men, on the Foundation of their own Works. This divine Purpose was without the Consideration of Sin. 2. He purposed to inflict Penalty upon them; this was with, and necessarily supposes the Consideration of Sin on their Part. The former was a sovereign Act, and had no Cause out of God: The latter was

an Act of God, as a Judge; and Sin is the meritorious Cause of the Punishment decreed. To will to exercise Justice towards a Creature, in Relation to his personal Acts is one Thing; and to decree to punish that Creature is another. God may will to act towards a Creature, according to Justice, on the Foundation of the Creature's personal Actions, without any Consideration either of good or evil Works done by that Creature. But he cannot decree to exercise his remunerative Justice towards the Creature, without the Consideration of the Creature's Obedience to his Law; neither can he resolve to exercise his punitive Justice towards the Creature, without the Consideration of the Creature's Disobedience to his Law. The Reason is evident, Justice directs not to reward without Obedience, nor to punish without Sin. As God may will to display his Goodness, in rendering sinful Men happy, without all Consideration of Holiness an them, without any Contradiction to his infinite Purity: So he may purpose, to display his Justice upon Men, without the Consideration of Sin in them, without the least Contradiction to his infinite Goodness. But as his Decree to render sinful Men happy, without the Consideration of Holiness in them, does not suppose, that they may be saved without Holiness: So his Intention to exercise his Justice towards some, without the Consideration of Sin, does not suppose, that they will be punished without Desert, or that he decreed to punish them without Desert. 3. *As God damns no Man but for Sin, so he decreed to damn no Man but for Sin*; *and therefore, in that Decree, Sin is constituted the Cause of Damnation*; *yet it is*

not the Cause of God's Will, to damn Men, but his Purpose to display his Justice towards them, is the Cause thereof; *tho' not without the Consideration of Sin,* *

* *Twiss* against *Mason,* pag. 86, 87.

4. Sin certainly follows upon Reprobation, yet Reprobation is not the Cause of Sin. (1.) Sin is foreknown to God. (2.) It is foreknown to him, either upon his Willing it to be, or before he wills the Being of it. If before he wills it to be, then he wills it to be, because he foresees it will be, which is absurd; and therefore, his Will of the Being of Sin, is prior to his Fore-knowledge, that it will be. (3.) The Being of Sin follows upon God's Will to permit it. 'Tis not what he effects, but what he permits, and, therefore, though its Being is certain, yet Men act it freely and without any Compulsion. *A*. This throws the whole Blame of Sin on God. ***C*.** It by no Means does. For, 1. God's Decree of the Being of sin, gives not Being to it, and therefore, God cannot justly be considered, as the Author of it. 2. The divine Decree to permit Man to sin, has no Influence upon his Will in sinning. He sins, without any Excitation from God to the Evil he commits, and, consequently, the Fault is wholly his and not God's. 3. It is not contrary to the Righteousness of God, to will the Being of Sin, if it was, he could not will its Being; but must necessarily will, that it shall not be, and then, since Sin is, the divine Will must have been *resisted* or overcome, which it is absurd to think. 4. If it is not contrary to the Justice of God to

will, that Sin shall be, it cannot be contrary to it, to Will to permit Man to sin. 5. Though Sin certainly follows upon God's Decree of the Permission of it, yet the Will of Man freely and not necessarily chooses Sin. 6. God's Foreknowledge of the Being of Sin, supposes, that it will certainly be; for if the Being of Sin was uncertain, it could not be fore-known that it would be, and, therefore, Sir, unless, you will deny as ***S.*** has done, divine Prescience, you must allow of the Certainty of the Being of Sin, as well as I: And, when you shall explain the Certainty of the Being of Sin, in a Consistency, with the Freedom of the Will of Man, in sinning, you will do what you seem to require of me, and vindicate my Opinion from the Absurdity of making God the Author of Sin. We must both grant, that the Certainty of the Being of Sin, is consistent with the Liberty of the Will of Man in sinning. The Difference between your Opinion and mine is this, you apprehend, that Sin will certainly be, upon the Supposition of God's Foreknowledge of its Being, prior to his Will, that it shall be, which seems absurd to me. And I conceive, that it will certainly be, upon God's willing the Being of it, and decreeing to permit Man to Sin. ***B.*** Here interrupted ***C.*** and ***A.*** And vehemently opposed what ***C.*** said concerning God's willing the Being of Sin, and charged this Notion with the worst of Consequences. ***C.*** said to him, Sir, I know your Leader Mr. *Baxter* hath used many Words on this Subject; but he hath expressed very little of Weight and deferring of Consideration. I have lately read what he offers on this Point, in his Book called *Catholick Theology,* and in

his *Methodus Theologiae*. If you please we will attend to what he delivers on this Head. *B*. It will be very agreeable to me, to hear what you can object to his Distinctions, upon the Subject, which, I think, let the Matter in a very clear and easy Light. ***C.*** I have quite a different Apprehension from you, relating to what that *Gentleman* has wrote on this Topic. However, let us consider, what he hath said on this difficult and weighty Subject. His Distinctions upon it which you seem to admire, are there. 1. *Be sure,* says he, *to distinguish the Name of Sin from the Nature*. 2. *And remember, that no outward Act is Sin, no farther than it is voluntary*. 3. *Distinguish between the Act, as it is in* Agentis, *and as it is in* passo. 4. *And between the Act and the Effect*. 5. *Between the Effect of a single Cause, and of divers Causes making a Compound Effect*. 6. *And between a forbidden Object compared with another*. The Use he makes of these *admirable* Distinctions is this. *God may will, that some one shall be the Subject on which an unlawful Act is put forth, and not will the Act. That he may will the Effect of an unlawful Act, and yet not will the Act itself. For Instance, he may will, that* David's *Wives shall be defiled, and yet not will the Act of defiling them. He also may will, that Christ shall be spit upon, buffeted, scourged, crowned with Thorns, and be crucified, and yet not will any of those wicked Acts*. *

* Catholic Theology. Part 1, 95, *etc*.

C. 1. Neither *David* could suffer by the Pollution of his Wives, nor could Christ suffer by the sinful Acts mentioned, without some one or more Persons acting those unlawful Things. 2. The Effects and the Acts expressed, are inseparable, and therefore, if God willed the Effects he must have also willed the Acts, for if those Effects could not be without those very Acts which produced them, God could not will the Effects, without willing the Acts. As a Judge cannot will, that a Criminal shall suffer Death, in this or the other manner, without willing the Act of putting him to Death, in that or the other manner: So God could not will, that Christ should suffer Death, by being suspended on and nailed to the Cross, without willing the Acts of suspending him on it and nailing him to it. 3. God either willed, that those wicked Acts should be done by some Agent, or without any, the latter, I imagine none will suppose, if not, then he willed some Person or Persons should do those Acts, and if he willed that any should do them, then he either willed, that those Acts should be done by some who were not concerned therein, or by those who were, the former surely none will think, and therefore, God willed not only, that such Acts should be done against Christ; but he also willed that those Acts should be done by the very Persons who were the Agents in his Crucifixion. Mr. *Baxter* recommending *Episcopius,* (a Champion of the *Arminian* Party) on those Texts, which are brought for the Support of my Opinion, caused me to consult him. And, I find, that he interprets {Acts. 4:27-28}, not of the Sufferings and Crucifixion of Christ, but of the Sufferings of

his Apostles, as predetermined of God, and observes, that *the Persecution they underwent, was not determined*; *but the Event of it, viz. their Affliction*. *

* Institut. Theolog. Lib. 4, Sect. 44.

You see, Sir, of whom Mr. *Baxter* learned some of his nice and curious Distinctions. But 1. It is evident, that the Sufferings and Crucifixion of our Saviour, by *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate,* and the *Jews,* are there spoken of, as a Fulfillment of the Prediction given in the second *Psalm* of the united Opposition of Governors and People against the *Messiah*.

Farther, he says, *that those who are here spoken of were not compelled or coached to afflict the Apostles*, (since they are not designed, we will readily allow it is true of their Actings against our Saviour.) Though these Persons were not compelled to those Acts, yet the Acts which they did were predetermined of God, otherwise he could not will that his Son should die the Death of the Cross. Mr. *Baxter* says, *it is a great and necessary Truth, that God decreed that Christ should die and be sacrificed, and yet decreed not, that the* Jews *or any one else should do it*. And he blames Dr. *Twiss*, for deriding this Assertion, but very unjustly, For, 1. God did not merely will, that his Son should die some way or other; but he willed, that he should die the Death of the Cross, and, consequently, he must have willed the Act of crucifying him,

by some Persons or other; that is, if he willed it, in a possible way, without doing it himself: If it was done at all, it must be done, by Instruments, or without: God did not will, that his Son should suffer on the Cross, without some being concerned, as Instruments, in his Crucifixion, and therefore, he willed their Act of crucifying him. 2. He decreed, that those very Persons should be the Actors of this vile Tragedy, who acted therein, and not others.

He proceeds to give Answers to several Arguments which Dr. *Twiss* has advanced to prove his Opinion. 1. His first Argument is this, *Permission is a Sign of Willingness, as well as Command, and what is permitted* (*and that for Good*) *infallibly cometh to pass*. Mr. *Baxter* answers, *it is false, that* non impedire efficaciter, *i.e.* not *to hinder effectually, is a Sign that one wills the Thing*. I reply: No Man can do any Act, but as he is supported by God in doing it. Again, if God wills to support a Creature in acting, he must be supposed to will the Act he does, though he approves not that Act; because if God did not will the Act, he would not will to support the Creature in the Act, without which, the Act could not be done. Farther, God either willed that his Son should suffer and die in the manner he did, by the Means of some, or without the Means of any; I can't persuade myself to think, that you will say, that God willed Christ should suffer and die on the Cross, without the Means of any, and if not, then it necessarily follows, that he willed his Sufferings and Death on the Cross by the Means of some: And if he willed this by

the Means of any, he must have willed it, by the Means of those, who acted in that vile Affair, and not by the Means of any others, for that it is plainly absurd to suppose. Consider this well, and let me ask you, whether, since God had decreed, that Christ should die on the Cross, he did not will, that some one or more should be concerned in nailing him to it? If you shall say, that God fore-saw, that the *Jews* would be inclined to crucify him, I would ask you, if you think, that they could have done it contrary to the Will of God? You will hardly answer in the Affirmative. ***B.*** No, I cannot do that. ***C.*** Then you must say, that though God had decreed the Crucifixion of Christ, and fore-saw, that the *Jews* would be disposed to crucify him, he neither willed, that they should, nor willed that they should not. It may be you will not care to affirm this, when you have thoroughly weighed it. Because it is absurd to say, that though God wills to support a Creature in acting; yet he neither wills, nor nills the Action, which the Creature does, as supported by him in that Action. Notwithstanding **Mr. *Baxter*** your Leader from some others affirms it. **Dr. *Twiss's*** second Reason is, *God is the principal Efficient of a sinful Action*: *Of* Absalom's, *for Instance, in defiling his Father's Wives, etc*. To which Mr. *Baxter* returns several Answers. 1. Says he, Hobbes *could desire little more*. This is a *vile* Insinuation; for the Dr. did not think, nor does his Argument suppose, that the will of *Absalom* was necessarily determined to the Choice he made by the Objects he beheld. 2. Says he, *God did not as a principal Efficient, cause* Absalom *to will that Congress with his Father's*

Concubines, nor to act it. Neither is this supposed, what is intended is this; that God, by virtue of whose Power every Creature acts, willed to support *Absalom* in so acting, and therefore, it must be thought, that he willed the Act. 3. He adds, *God suspends his own Operation, so as not to necessitate the Will*. This is very impertinently observed. For it is not apprehended, that the Will is necessitated to make the evil Choice it does, in Sin. What is maintained is, that since the Will acts dependently on God, he must will the Act of the Creature's Will, though he does not Cause and necessitate the Will of the Creature to act as it does.

3. The *Dr's*. third Argument is, *God doth not give that effectual Grace, without which he fore-knoweth Sin will not be avoided*; *and therefore, he is willing that it be done*. The Sense of this Argument, I take to be this; God does not will to prevent Sin in some Instances; and therefore, he wills Sin to be acted in those Instances. Mr. *Baxter* denys the Consequence: And says, *it only followeth, that he doth not absolutely and effectually Will it*. To which I reply, 1. It is absurd to suppose, that God partly wills, and partly not wills any Thing: His most holy Sovereign Will cannot possibly, either partly will, or partly will. 2. If God partly wills a Thing, and yet that Thing is; then his Will, so far as it is acted in nilling, is *resisted* or overcome. 3. God undoubtedly preserves the Liberty of Men, when he wills to prevent, and does prevent their sinning, by the Influence of his Grace upon them; and therefore, tho' he doth not will in such a Way, that Men shall not sin, as is inconsistent with the

Freedom of their Will, it follows not, from his not forcibly preventing their Sin, that he wills their Actions. Which **Mr. *Baxter*** seems to suppose does follow, by a Comparison he makes of the different Conduct of a King towards his Children and towards a Traitor, in Relation to eating Poison.

4. Dr. *Twiss* reasons thus: *God willed to manifest his pardoning Mercy, and to exercise his punitive Justice*; *neither of which can be without the Being of Sin, and therefore, God must be supposed to will the Being of it*. *God willeth* Malum esse, *i.e*. that Sin be, *as the Matter of exercising his Mercy and Justice, not as his Sin, but* tantum vult fieri malum alterius, *i.e*. only as the Sin of another. Says Mr. *Baxter, I deny it with Horror,* as a Reproach to God's Justice. This *Gentleman,* was sometimes seized with Horror, when he had nothing terrible in his View, and so he was here. After his Fit of Horror is a little over, he begins to argue thus: *The* Terminus a quo *is not the* Materia Misericordiae vel Justitiae exercendae. He means Sin is not the Matter of exercising Mercy or Justice. I reply, a sinful Creature is the Subject whereon pardoning Mercy or punitive Justice are exercised, and Sin is the Matter about which they are exercised; if, therefore, God willed the Exercise of his pardoning Mercy on some, and the Exercise of his punitive Justice on others, he must be supposed to will the Being of Sin in both. Again, those are not delivered from Sin, who suffer Punishment for it; and, consequently, Sin is very improperly called the *Terminus a quo*, in Relation to them, by **Mr. *Baxter*.**

5. Says the ***Dr.*** *by the same Reason as God might not will the Being of Sin, by his Permission, be might not permit it. A raw unproved Assertion,* says **Mr. *Baxter***. *

* *Catholic Theology* P. 1, pag. 97, 98, *etc*.

I reply, it is not so: For, 1. It is the Nature of Sin, that is contrary to the Holiness of God, and not the Being of Sin: If the Being of Sin was contrary to his Holiness, he could not permit the Being of it. And, therefore, 2. God may will the Being of Sin by his Permission, for herein he acts nothing contrary to his own infinite Rectitude. 3. Yet we do not say, that God *desires* his Creatures to Sin. Desire implies an Approbation of the Thing desired. But a Will to permit the Creature to sin, implies no such Thing. Again, to approve of the Being of Sin to certain wise Ends, is one Thing; and to approve of the Creature's committing Sin, is quite another. The former God does, the latter he does not, nor can do. ***C.*** said to ***B.*** Sir, if you please to allow me the Liberty, I will mention some other Arguments to prove, that God wills the Being of Sin. ***B.*** Do if you chose it. ***C.*** My first Argument is this: *God foreknew that Sin would be*; *his Prescience is immutable*; *it cannot be so from mutable Causes, as all second Causes are*; *and therefore, its Immutability arises from the divine Will, that Sin shall be*; *and, consequently, God must have willed the Being of sin*. 2. *Either God willed or nilled it, or neither. It cannot be said, that he nilled it, because nothing is, he nilling it. — That he did not will,*

neither not nill; *because what he neither wills, nor not wills, that he is unconcerned about*; *wherefore Sin would be without the Providence of God*; *for the Care of God, and the Providence of God, are one and the same*; *as appears* {1Corinthians. 9:9}. *Therefore, he willed* (Sin); *but as we say, with a Will permitting not effecting. But you will say, this is not a sufficient Enumeration*: *For be may partly will, and partly nill. The Sense may be twofold, of this partly willing, and partly nilling*: *Either it is this*; *that this Action of the Will of God is mixed of a Will and no Will*; *of such Sort was the Act of those, who cast* Jonah *into the Sea, who had a Desire to save him, but because they could not, except they perished themselves, they unwillingly cast him into the Sea. In this Sense, this Enumeration is most false*; *for God doth nothing unwillingly. Or this is the Sense of the Enumeration, that God wills not Sin for itself, but for some other End.*

And this Sense is most true. The Words of **Perkins** *deserve our Notice*. I do not deny, says he, but God permits Evil, as it is in itself evil, (otherwise it would not properly be evil in Nature) but I deny, that he permits it, because it is evil. For God never permits Evil, because of itself, but because of a connected Good. This is that ***Beza*** intends against ***Castellio*** on Predestination. God never permits Sins, as they are Sins; but always prohibits and forbids them. *

* Macccvi. Loci. Com. pag. 207.

After debating this Point, A proceeded in objecting to the Opinion of *C*. concerning Predestination. And said, *That it makes God to have destined Men to eternal Damnation, whom he considered as innocent*. *C*. This Charge is false. For, 1. Tho' God determined to exercise his Justice towards some Men on the Foundation of their own Works: Yet, 2. He did not appoint them to suffer Punishment, considered as innocent: To decree to exercise Justice towards some, on the Foundation of their own Works is one Thing, and to decree to inflict Penalty on them, is another. As it is one Thing for God to determine to act towards some Men, not on the Foundation of their own Works, but according to his free and unmerited Favor; and to decree to render them for ever happy in the Fruition of himself, is another. And as God may determine to show forth his Goodness towards some, without the Consideration of a Meetness in them for the Enjoyment of Bliss; tho' he cannot appoint them to the Possession of eternal Life, without the Consideration of that Meetness: So he may decree to exercise his Justice towards others, without the Consideration of a Fitness in them for Destruction; tho' he cannot appoint them to Punishment, without the Consideration of that Fitness. ***A.*** *This Opinion of yours necessarily makes God a Hypocrite, or insincere, in declaring, that he desires the Salvation of all, at least, who hear the Gospel*. ***C.*** 1. This is not a very modest Way of

expressing the Objection. 2. It is not yet proved, that God expresses a Desire of the Salvation of all who hear the Gospel. 3. If it is true, that God desires the Salvation of all who hear the Gospel; he is either able to effect their Salvation, or he is not able: If he is not, then he desires that *that* may be which he cannot bring about; which it is irrational to suppose. If he is able to effect it, and does not; then he must be thought to desire that to be, which tho' he can accomplish, he will not; this is as unreasonable a Supposition, as the former. ***A.*** *This supposes no Weakness in God*; *but it would not become his Wisdom and Righteousness to do more in order to the Salvation of Men, than he actually does, because the Freedom of the human Will must be preferred. The Uncertainty therefore, of the Salvation of Men, tho' God desires, it, arises not from the Nature of God, who is omnipotent, and able to do whatever he pleases, that is becoming his infinite Perfections*; *but from the Nature of Man, who is not to be compelled to choose even his own Happiness. As God created Man a free Agent, and so a proper Subject of moral Government, it can't consist with Wisdom to destroy his free Agency, in his Operations on Man, even tho' it be to save and render him happy.* ***C.*** Your Reasoning here seems to me to reflect on divine Wisdom; for it supposes, that God has given Being to a Creature of such a Nature, that he, himself, cannot possibly render its Happiness certain, tho' he earnestly desires it, and is at the greatest Expense in order to it. How could Wisdom direct in the Formation of a Creature, whose Nature is such, that it

necessarily renders its certain Happiness absolutely impossible, even tho' infinite Goodness desires it, and Omnipotence acts in order to it? God then has disappointed himself of his own Wishes, by making Man of such a Nature, that he may be unavoidably miserable, notwithstanding he most earnestly desires his Happiness. Will not God therefore repent that he has made Man, since he has made him of such a Nature, that he cannot secure that Good to him, which it is his most ardent Wish, he should enjoy? I should think he certainly will. 2. But it is not yet proved, and I am bold to say, it never will be, that God cannot infallibly determine the Will of Man to the Choice of what is right and fit, without destroying his free Agency. 3. If the Salvation of no Man is possible without Regeneration, and Regeneration is the Work of God, which it certainly is: If no Man can be saved without Faith, and Faith is the Gift of Gods which it undoubtedly is; then unless God regenerates Men, and gives Faith to them, their Salvation is impossible: And if there are some Men, whom God does not regenerate, to whom he does not give the Grace of Faith, the Salvation of those Men is not possible, and, consequently, God cannot will their Salvation; for it is absurd to think, that he can will Impossibilities. 4. That the effectual Determination of the Will of a Creature to the Choice of Good is consistent with Freedom, is evident. (1). From Christ, who could not but Will to obey his Father, and yet he freely willed to obey him. *A. Our Saviour might have willed to disobey him, or have sinned.* *

* Episcopii *Respons*. *ad Defens*. Camer. cap. 12.

C. Then the Author of our Salvation might have become a Sinner, and stood in need of a Saviour himself. This is shocking to think, and it is more so to express the Thought. (2). If an intelligent Creature can be rendered immutably happy; then the Will of that Creature, may be effectually determined to the Choice of Good, without the Loss of its natural Freedom: If it cannot, then some time or other, Christ may will Evil, the holy Angels may will Evil, glorified, Saints may will Evil; and so Heaven may become entirely empty of all its Inhabitants: And our Saviour, Angels, and the Saints who are now above, may all become the Companions of Devils, and sink down into the infernal Pit! Which who can think is possible? And if that is not possible, then according to this Principle, there as no such Thing as voluntary Service perform'd in the World above; but free Agency is lost by our Saviour, by Angels, and by the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*. Take which of these you please, Sir. ***A.*** You seem to be very confident of the unanswerable Force of your Dilemma. But it don't affect me at all: For what I maintain is, that the Will of an intelligent Creature, that is immutably happy, is indeed invariably disposed to the Choice of what is good, but that it is freely so disposed. ***C.*** Very well, none deny that: But how comes the Will to be invariably disposed to make this good and wise Choice? Is it from its own Nature? ***A.*** I cannot say that. ***C.*** How then? ***A.***

In Consequence of the Will of God, that *that* Creature shall so will, and be happy for ever. ***C.*** Your Answer is just. I suppose, you do not think, that the Will of God deprives the Will of the immutably happy Creature of its Liberty, in any of its Acts. *A*. I do not. ***C.*** Are you able to explain how the Freedom of the Will can consist with this invariable Disposition to the Choice of Good? *A*. I am not able. ***C.*** Then my Reasoning stands firm, and the Force of my Dilemma, you must allow is unanswerable. ***A.*** How does that appear? ***C.*** Thus: If it is not from the Nature of the Will itself, that it is invariably inclined to Good, but from the divine Will; then God may preserve the Will of a Creature from making an unwise Choice, and always effectually direct it to chuse what is right and fit, without infringing its natural Liberty. ***A.*** That I see I must not venture to deny. ***C.*** Then, I think, you will be obliged to allow me all, that I desire you to grant in this Matter, *viz*. That Necessity may be without Co-action, and may consist with the natural Freedom of the Will. And, therefore, you ought not to refuse granting, that God may effectually dispose, the Wills of Men on Earth, to choose what is good, without any Prejudice to their free Agency; tho' you cannot explain, how this infallible Determination of the human Will to make a wise and happy Choice, in Consequence of the Purpose of God, that such a Choice it shall make, may consist with its natural Freedom. For, that which does not destroy the Liberty of the human Will in Heaven, cannot reasonably be thought to destroy it on Earth. If God may prevent Men when in Heaven, from making at

any Time an unwise Choice, and may cause them always to choose what is good, without Prejudice to their natural Liberty, either demonstrate, that he cannot effectually determine the human Will to make a wise Choice, consistent with its Liberty, so long as Men are in this State: Or grant, as you ought to grant it, that God may now infallibly determine Men to choose what is wise and fit, and they still remain free Agents.

IV. ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** Thinking enough was spoken concerning the Doctrine of Predestination, they expressed a Desire, to enter upon the Points of our Acceptance with God, and the Pardon of our Sins: Or of our Justification and Redemption by Christ. They asked ***C.*** if by what he had said, in delivering his Sentiments, he did not intend, that the Holiness and Obedience of Christ, is our justifying Righteousness; as imputed to us of God: And if he did not mean, that Christ by his Sufferings procured the *actual* Remission of our Sins, Peace, and Reconciliation with God, and a full and certain Security from that Penalty, our Sins subject us to. ***C.*** answered to both in the Affirmative. ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** greatly disapproved of his Principles in Relation to these momentous Subjects. Each had his Objections, to the Opinions of ***C.*** though there was some Difference in their Apprehensions, concerning these Points. They agreed upon desiring ***C.*** to mention the Reasons why he thought, that we are justified by the Holiness and Obedience of Christ, and accordingly he did. ***C.***

1. My first Reason is, Christ was our Surety, in his Obedience to the Law {Hebrews. 7:22}. Hence we read of his *being made under the Law to redeem us from it,* as a Covenant of Works. What is done by a Surety for others, is accepted for, and imputed to them. Christ fulfilled the holy Law of God, as such, and therefore, his Obedience is imputed to them, whose Surety he was, and they are justified or accounted righteous, in Consequence of the Imputation of that Obedience to them. ***S.*** *I deny that Christ was our Surety to God, a Surety indeed he was*; *but be was not a Surety for us to God, but a Surety for God to us, Crellius* on {Hebrews. 7:22}. ***A.*** expressed his Satisfaction in Part with what ***S.*** said, *and denied, that Christ became a Surety for us to do what the Law required of us in order to Justification*. But declared, that he apprehended, *Christ was not only a Surety on the Part of God to Men*; *but also for Men with God, yet not to perform for them what the Law demands of them, but engaged, that they should be converted, and be saved from the Wrath of God*. *

* Curcell. *p*. 301, Limborch, *p*. 269.

C. 1. God on his Part needs no Surety. He is Truth and cannot lye, nor is attended with Weakness, he is able to fulfil his Promises. 2. Christ could not render God more certain of our Conversion, and Salvation, by his Engagement or Promise to convert us, than he was, prior in order of Nature, to that

Engagement. 3. This supposes, that Christ was a Surety for God to us, rather than a Surety for us to God. For his Engagement makes us sure what will be done for us on the Part of God, and not what ought to be done by us.

2. We are made righteous by the Obedience of Christ. There is no way of being constituted righteous by the Obedience of another, except by the Imputation of it; and therefore, I conclude, that the Righteousness of Christ is imputed to us for Justification. ***S.*** *insisted upon it, that the Sense of those Words is, that all the Posterity of* Adam, *who sinned in any manner, became guilty of his Disobedience*; *so those, who obey as Christ did, tho' not so perfectly, shall receive the Reward as he did*. *

* Crellius in **Ro 5:19**.

C. answered, 1. That it is the professed Design of the Apostle to treat of the Imputation of Sin, and of *Adam's* Sin. 2. To prove, that Mankind become subject to Death in Consequence of the Imputation of sin, *viz*. of the Sin of *Adam*. 3. Of the Imputation of Righteousness, *i.e*. of Christ's Righteousness. 4. Of our Justification as an Effect of that Imputation of his Obedience, and therefore, 5. He must intend, that we are made righteous or justified by the Imputation of his Obedience to us.

3. That Righteousness by which we are justified in the Sight of God, is *not by a Law,* it is not *by the Works* of a Law; and it is *a Righteousness without Works*. Neither of which can be

said of our own personal Righteousness. For every Law requires a personal Obedience of those who are in Subjection to it. And Obedience to a Law, consists of Works done, that it prescribes. And such a Righteousness cannot be said to be without Works. Our justifying Righteousness, is not of a Law, it is not of the Deeds of a Law. It is without Works, and therefore, it cannot be our own Obedience to any Law; but it must be the Righteousness of another, *viz*. of Christ. ***S.*** *It is not by the moral or mosaic Law nor of the Deeds of that Law, it is without perfect Works*. ***A.*** and ***B.*** said the same. *

* Crellius in **Ro 3:20**, Limborch *p*. 748, Curcell. *p*. 935, *Method*. *Theolog*. Pars 3, 341.

C. This is not to explain, but to contradict the Apostle. These Distinctions you have not yet proved true, nor ever will prove them so.

4. The Person justified w*orks not, i.e*. in order to Justification, he is justified without it. Which must necessarily be by the Righteousness of another. *S*. That is to say, *he does not perfect Works,* Slichtingius on {Romans. 4:5}. ***C.*** Still Contradiction, and not Interpretation. *Paul* says the Man works not, *viz*. in order to Justification; you say he does work to that End, and that his Works justify him.

5. God justifies the *ungodly,* who cannot be supposed to be the Subjects of Holiness, and evangelical Obedience; they must therefore be justified by the Righteousness of another. *S*. *Not such who now are, but once were ungodly*: *Crellius* on

{Romans. 4:5}, so said ***A.*** and ***B. C.*** This is but your bare say-so; you are not able to prove it, or to prove that an ungodly Man cannot be the Subject of Justification.

6. The Reward would be of Debt, if our own Obedience justified us, *i.e.* according to that Law, to which our Obedience is a Conformity. A Debt it is not, and therefore our Obedience is not our justifying Righteousness. ***S.*** *It is not due in strict Justice, or according to the perfect Law of God. Crellius* on {Romans. 4:4}. ***C.*** And this is but your bare Assertion without Proof, that so the Apostle means.

7. Christ is made unto us *Righteousness,* as well as *Sanctification,* and therefore, that is distinct from Sanctification, or not the same with it, and if it is something distinct from it, that must be a Righteousness for Justification. Sanctification Christ is made to us, as he has Grace in his Keeping for us, and conveys it to us to make us holy. Since Righteousness is another tiring, he must be made that to us some other way: And that can be no other than Imputation; because Imputation and Communication are the only two ways, wherein Christ can be made any Thing to us. *S. Righteousness is to be understood of Absolution or the Pardon of Sin.* *

* Socin. *de Servat. Pars* 4, Cap. 5.

C. That confounds Righteousness with Redemption, and therefore, you are mistaken, for they are not the same Thing, but distinct Benefits. ***A.*** *It can't intend the Imputation of*

Christ's Righteousness, for Wisdom and Sanctification imputed, are mere Trifles. *

* Limborch. *p*. 745.

C. Though they are not imputed, this which is distinct from each, may be, nay it must be, for if it is communicated, it can't be a different Benefit, but is certainly included in one or both of them. *A*. *It is a Metonymy of the Cause, i.e*. *Christ is the Cause of our obtaining Righteousness from God*. *

* Limborch. Ibid.

C. The Words are an Assertion of what God makes Christ to us, and, not of what he obtains of God for us, and, consequently, it is an unnatural and forced Sense which you put upon them {1Corinthians. 1:30}. ***B.*** If I remember well, you mentioned, that the Holiness of Christ is imputed to us. ***C.*** I did. ***B.*** what do you design by that; the Purity of his Nature? ***C.*** I do. And I apprehend, that is one Branch of our justifying Righteousness, and take it to be designed in {Romans. 8:2}. For these Reasons. It is opposed to the Depravity of our Hearts. And Christ is the Subject of it, not we ourselves. And it is of our Justification, that the Apostle there speaks, or of our Freedom from Condemnation, by Christ. This is what some, I am of Opinion, have meant, by imputed Sanctification, which I understand has given you great Offense. The Thought is just, though improperly called

Sanctification, for it is a Part of our Righteousness for Justification. ***B.*** I can by no means be satisfied with your Opinion of the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ. ***C.*** Why so? ***B.*** For various Reasons. ***C.*** Be pleased to produce them. ***B.*** They are these. 1. *The Phrase is not in Scripture*. ***C.*** The Scripture asserts, that we are made righteous by the Obedience of one, *i.e*. Christ; unless, therefore, you are able to show, how we can be made righteous by another's Obedience, except by the Imputation of it to us, you ought to allow, that it is imputed to us as our justifying Righteousness. You have not as yet showed how we can otherwise be made righteous by that Obedience, and I am persuaded, that you never will be able to do it. ***B.*** 2. *To impute signifies, to repute or judge that we ourselves are the Subjects of those Habits, and the Authors of those individual Actions, which Christ himself in his own Person had and performed*. ***C.*** This is false, the Imputation of the Act of one to another does not suppose that Act to be the personal Act of him to whom it is imputed, or it is not a reputing and judging that Act to be his personal Act. ***B.*** 3. *The Accident of one, cannot be the Accident of another*. ***C.*** It is true, that another cannot become the Subject of that Accident, or it cannot be in him; it is only in him, whose Accident it is; but it may be reckoned, or imputed to him. You confound Imputation and Transfusion, which are absolutely distinct; the latter cannot be, the former may. ***B.*** 4. *Christ and Believers are not one Person*. ***C.*** That is false. For he is the Head, and they are the Members; and they constitute one mystical Person; tho' not one individual

Person, which is what you deny, and no Man is so *mad* as to assert. As a Surety and the Principal are one Person in the Eye of the Law; so Christ, who is our Surety, and we whose Surety he is, are one in the Eye of the divine Law; and this is the Foundation of the Imputation of his Righteousness to us. ***B.*** 5. *Christ's Righteousness, as to its Effects, is imputed to us, but not that Righteousness itself.* *

* *Method. Theolog,* Pars 3, pag. 308.

C. To speak of the Imputation of the Effects of Christ's Righteousness, as exceedingly improper; Imputation can have no Place in them, they are bestowed upon us, and we become the Subjects of them, by a gracious Communication of those Effects to us; but that is very far from Imputation. Thus ***S.***, ***A.*** and *B.* united in opposing the Opinion of ***C.*** relating to Justification by the Imputation of the Holiness and Obedience of Christ. And they all pronounced it blasphemous, and subversive of the Christian Religion. ***B.*** was not less severe in his Expressions, than ***S.*** and ***A. C.*** *Gentlemen,* you are very severe in your Censures; but without all Foundation: The Necessity of Holiness, I deny not, God forbid I should; and I maintain as well as you, that evangelical Obedience, certainly springs from the spiritual Principles implanted in the Hearts of the Saints; tho' I cannot be persuaded, that either singly, or joyntly taken, they are the Matter and Cause of their Justification before God. When I say, that they are not necessary to our Acceptance, I do not

deny the Necessity of their Being; all I deny is, that they are necessary to the End of our Justification before God. And I think myself obliged to deny this, and ever shall think so, say all of you what you please; until I shall read in the Bible, that Christ is not *the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believes*. ***D.*** said to ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** *Gentlemen,* you have not used ***C.*** well, in my Opinion: You have drawn such Consequences from his Sentiments, as are far from being just and true: You have taken the Liberty to state his Opinions in a false Light, to the End that you might infer what you pleased from them, to make them seem absurd; but he has thoroughly discovered your Fallacy, and defended his Principles, hitherto, to my Satisfaction; and, therefore, I must take the Liberty, to tell you once more, that I am very near being persuaded to become a Christian; and I certainly shall, if he should have the same success in answering to your future Objections, which has happily attended him in answering to those, you have yet mentioned. ***S., A., B.*** Sir, do not conclude upon the Truth of ***C's*** Principles, for we shall be able to prove, that Faith is imputed for Righteousness. We shall thoroughly unite in maintaining this, in Opposition to his Opinion of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ alone, as embraced by Faith, ***S.*** *As to what concerns us, i.e. in the Business of Justification*; *we are not otherwise accounted righteous before God, and obtain the Remission of our Sins, than as we believe in Jesus Christ. And we ought to beware, not to assert, that this is the efficient or impulsive Cause of our Justification before God, for it is only a Cause,*

without which, God has decreed not to justify us. Our Obedience, i.e. of Faith, is neither the efficient, nor the meritorious, yet a Cause (as they express it) sine qua non, *of our Justification before God, and of our eternal Salvation.**

* Socin. Justificat. Synopsis. 2.

A. *The Medium in us, which God requires of us, as a Condition requisite to Justification, is Faith in* Jesus Christ. *Our Obedience which we perform of Faith, and which is imperfect, God graciously for the Sake of Christ, wills to esteem as if perfect. Not that our Repentance or Works deserve any Thing with God; either are so perfect, that they could stand in his Judgment, if he should will strictly to examine; God forbid I should say this: But because God by another Law and Condition, will make us Partakers of Salvation, purchased by the Blood of Christ. They* (Believers) *will rather be accounted righteous for the Sake of the Righteousness and Obedience of Christ, which, he yielded to the Father on the Cross, to expiate the Sins of the whole World; than for their own, which being strictly examined according to the Law, is unworthy of this Name, viz. Obedience. **

* Limborch *Theolog. Christ.* Lib. 6, cap. 4. Curcell. pag. 939, 940. Ibid. 907.

C. said to ***B.*** Sir, I suppose you agree in Opinion with *S*. and *A*. concerning Faith as a proper Condition of Justification; and that it is imputed to us for Righteousness. ***B.*** I do. *

* Baxter's Aphorisms of Justification. Thesis 23.

C. But do you not think, that they speak in too low and degrading Terms concerning our own personal Righteousness, when they say that is not the impulsive and meritorious Cause of our Happiness; and that if compared with the holy Law of God, it deserves not the Name of Obedience. ***B.*** Yes, I cannot but blame ***S.*** and ***A.*** for depreciating our Holiness at that Rate. And I am bold to maintain against them, as well as against all the *ignorant Wretches* of your Opinion, that *Dignity or Merit attends our own personal Obedience*. *

* *Method*. *Theolog*. Pars 3, pag. 317.

C. Sir, it is so frequent with you to impute *Blockishness, Ignorance* and *Pride* to me, for opposing you, that I am not by this Time in the least affected with it. You will do well to consider what Degree of Merit attends that, or what Share of Praise it entitles you to. This I am sure of, that when you call me *Blockhead, Fool,* or such like Names, you add nothing to my Understanding, But, good Sir, be pleased to let me hear your Reasons, why you think we merit Favors at the Hand of God. ***B.*** I will assign my Reasons; but I desire first to

distinguish concerning Merit. And *that is either commutative*; *in that Sense Angels, Man in Innocency, nor Christ himself could merit*. *Or it is distributive*; *in this Sense only, I maintain, that we merit by our Obedience,* ***C.*** Can any Creature merit the Favour of God, in a different Way. ***B.*** *No*. *I deny that altogether*. Catholic Theology, Part 2, pag. 79. ***C.*** Your Reasons, if you please, for Merit in that Sense wherein you assert it. *B*. They are these: 1. *We are often said to be worthy in Scripture*. ***C.*** axiov, worthy, intends not Desert but *Meetness*; *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance,* that is to say, suitable to Repentance, and not deferring of it, {Matthew. 3:6}. And so it is to be taken, when Christ says, *they shall walk with me in White, for they are worthy, viz. meet* to possess, but not deferring of that Happiness. ***B.*** 2. *Goodness is amiable and pleasing to God*. *Faith is a mean fitted to procure the Love of God, Holiness and Felicity*. ***C.*** That which flows from divine Love, cannot procure it. Faith is an Effect of God's Love, and therefore, it cannot be a Cause of it. Again, that which, because it is imperfect, deserves or subjects us to Punishment, cannot entitle us to the divine Favor, and eternal Life. Such is our Faith and best Holiness: *All our Righteousness are as filthy Rags*. Do you think that we shall at last be justified, principally on Account of what Christ has done and suffered for us, or on Account of our Faith and personal Holiness? ***B.*** It is my firm Opinion, *that we shall at the Day of Judgment especially be justified on Account of Faith, and our own personal Holiness*. *It must be said, that the Glory of Christ was first intended*; *and that*

the Righteousness or Merit, and federal Donation of Christ, are the Cause of our Justification, far more eminently than Faith; *but that Faith and our federal Fidelity will especially be the determining deciding Cause at that Day*. *

* Method. Theolog. Part 3, page 349.

C. What Papist will say more. ***B.*** I am not ashamed to own, that I think, the Papists are much sounder in the Doctrine of Justification, than you and many other hot-headed Protestants are. ***C.*** I suppose you mean such as *Calvin, Zanchy, Beza, Turretin, Twiss, Pemble, Owen, Maccovius, etc*. ***B.*** I do. ***C.*** I like my Company very well, and think myself highly honored to be ranked among such Persons. If these are your *Blockheads, Dunces,* or whatever else you, in your Christian and *Gentleman-like* Manner, shall please to call them, I am fully content to fall under your severest Censures with them, I assure you, Sir.

Now *Gentlemen,* said ***C.*** if you please, I desire you will favor me with an Account why you think, that Faith is imputed to us in order to Justification. ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** we will. It is this; *Faith is expressly said to be imputed to* Abraham, *for Righteousness*; *and* Rahab *is said to be justified by Works*; *and therefore we cannot, but conclude that Faith is, at least, the Matter of our Evangelical Righteousness, or Justification according to the Gospel*. ***C.*** Faith sometimes is put for the Object. I suppose you will make no Difficulty of allowing

that it is in these Words: *Before Faith came, we were shut up under the Law*. And that it is to be taken in this Sense, in the Places you refer to, many Arguments might be advanced to prove. As that Faith is a Work — its Fruits are good Works, and therefore, if we are justified by Faith, and its Effects, we are justified by Works; which we certainly are not. Farther, Faith and that Righteousness, by which we are justified, are plainly distinguished; and, consequently, Faith cannot be that Righteousness. Moreover, that which because of its Imperfection needs Pardon, cannot juicily; for it is absurd to conceive, that those Acts, which render us guilty in the Sight of God, on Account of Defects which attend them, can render us the fit Objects of Justification. I add, the Believer acts other Things besides Faith, *etc*. For the *Flesh lusteth against the Spirit,* and therefore, tho' some of his Actions are approved of God, there are many in him, which God detests; and by Consequence, his personal Actions, cannot justify him in his Sight. Many other Reasons I could mention, why Faith is not to be interpreted of the Act; but that it is to be understood of the Object, *i.e*. Christ, or his Righteousness, but I shall only mention one more at this Time, which is, that *that* must necessarily be our justifying Righteousness, by which we are made righteous, and that is the Obedience of Christ, and not Faith. ***S., A.*** and *B*. How will you then reconcile *Paul* and *James*. ***C.*** Briefly, and without any Difficulty. *Paul* treats of the Matter of Justification, which Faith views, depends upon and embraces: *James* discourses of a dead inactive Faith, or of a *bare* Assent to evangelical

Truths, which is not productive of good Works. That it is his Design, to prove, that *that* Faith is of no Value, which is not attended with good Works, is most evident; and, therefore, it is his Intention to prove, that a Man, who is the Subject only of a dead Faith, has no Ground to conclude upon his Justification in the Sight of God. He does not enter throughout his Discourse, upon the Matter of our Acceptance with our supreme Judge. Whereas that is what the Apostle *Paul* professedly treats of. This, *Gentlemen,* is I think, a fair and easy Reconciliation of the two Apostles, *Paul* and *James*. But you may meet with more Reasons for what I now advance, in the Answer to *Ruin and Recovery,* published some Time since, and in many other Writings which may perhaps be better to your liking, than that will be; consult them on this Head. ***S.*** *This your Opinion of the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, is so foul and execrable*; *that I shall not believe, that a more pestilent Error existed among the People of God, since Men were born into the World*. This ***S.*** said upon a Supposition, that evangelical Holiness is not required of us. *

* Socin. *de Servat*. Pars 4, cap. 7.

C. Sir, you mistake, Holiness is required of us, as a Meetness for Heaven, and w*ithout it no Man shall see the Lord*; but it is not required of us, as our Title to eternal Life; or as the Matter of our Acceptance with God. ***B.*** was equally severe in censuring the Opinion of ***C.*** He pronounced it blasphemous;

but was obliged to state it in a false Light, that he might have proper Ground to support this Charge, *viz. That we perfectly performed the Commands of the Law in* Christ; *and, therefore, never sinned, and, consequently, the Blood of Christ was shed in vain to procure our Pardon.* *

* *Method. Theolog.* Pars 3, pag. 323.

C. defended himself from this Charge thus. 1. What Christ did for us, he only was the personal Actor of: His Acts were not our personal Acts. 2. But as he performed Acts of Obedience to the Law, as our Surety, that said a proper Foundation for the Imputation of his Righteousness to us. And, therefore, 3. When it is said, if any have so said, that we obeyed the Law in Christ, the Meaning is, not that we personally obeyed; but that our Surety and Representative, obeying for us, we are reckoned to have obeyed in him; the Acts were his personal Acts not ours, nor can be accounted our personal Acts. And, therefore, there is no Foundation for this dreadful Charge, nor is the Conclusion just, that Christ died in vain to obtain our Pardon. For we are personally Sinners, and so we stand condemned by the Law; to free us from that Condemnation our Saviour suffered for us; being personally Sinners, we cannot be personally righteous; hence it was necessary, that Christ should bring in an everlasting Righteousness for us, which he did; and by the Imputation of that Righteousness we are justified: and no otherwise in the Sight of God. This Charge and Conclusion suppose, that God

determined to account us, such as Christ was in himself, and in his Obedience, without Regard in any Sense to our personal Actions, whether just or unjust, which is most false. For, because God accounted us in ourselves unrighteous and guilty, we being really so; he appointed Christ to be our Surety and Representative, to obey and suffer for us, he doing both; thereupon God pardons our Guilt, and justifies our Persons. Hence it is easy to see, that God as our Lawgiver and Judge, first respects us in ourselves personally, and so he finds us guilty and sinful; and then respects in Christ, so he finds us righteous, not personally, but in him only. ***C.*** What I have now said, I hope is sufficient to vindicate my Opinion from the Charge of Blasphemy ***B.*** has been pleased to exhibit against it; and also to prove the Necessity of the Satisfaction of Christ: Which we will now enter upon, if you think proper, *Gentlemen*. ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** answered that by this Time they thought that Subject demanded their Attention. ***S.*** Vehemently opposed the whole of the Sentiments of ***C.*** in this Point, he absolutely denied that Christ made Satisfaction for Sin. And several Objections he railed and urged against it.

1. *That Remission and Satisfaction are inconsistent, and as opposite, as Day and Night, Light and Darkness*. ***C.*** answered ***S.*** That we are thro' Christ in the same State, as a Debtor or a Delinquent is, whose Debt is forgiven and whose Crime is pardoned. (1.) Sin is not imputed: *God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their*

Trespasses to them. *Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin*. (2.) We are free from Condemnation: *Who shall Condemn? There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*. (3.) We are not under Obligation to suffer Punishment; but are secured from suffering any Penal Evil: *Being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him*. More than these Particulars cannot be said of a Delinquent, whose Crime is remitted. This Freedom from a Charge of Guilt, from Condemnation, and Obligation to undergo Punishment, expresses the whole of the State of an Offender, who is pardoned. Remission of a Crime contains nothing more in it, than these three Things. And these Particulars are the principal Ideas, which the Scripture designs to express by the Forgiveness of our Sins. 2. If our Pardon is both an Art of Mercy and an Act of Justice, a Satisfaction must be given for our Transgressions, not by ourselves, but by another for us. And it is as well an Act of Justice, as of Mercy: For God is *Just, i.e*. he appears to be Just *as the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus*: And he *is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins*. His Fidelity appears in fulfilling his Promises of Pardon, and his Justice shines in the way of our Remission. In this Affair *Mercy* and *Truth* unite, *Righteousness* and *Peace,* both have Place. And, consequently, 3. A Satisfaction is given, not by ourselves, for then this would not be an Act of Mercy; but by another for us, otherwise it cannot be an Act of Justice, which it undoubtedly is. 4. We had no Concern in the Appointment of this Satisfaction, nor were we personally concerned at all in

giving of this Satisfaction. The Constitution of Christ, a Surety to satisfy for us, was wholly without us, and he paid our whole Debt, without our concurring with him in the Payment of it, and therefore, our Deliverance from the Obligation, as to us, is a gratuitous Act, though at the same time, it is also an Act of Justice. The Provision which God has made for maintaining the Rights of his Justice, obscures not the Glory of his Grace; since his Grace made that Provision. 5. Our Sponsor received his Ability, to pay our Debt, from God, who made him *strong for himself*. 6. It is false, which you assert, that this Satisfaction was unnecessary, for it became God to act thus in this Business, and therefore, he could not do otherwise, nor herein did he take *an useless Circuit,* as you boldly express it. 7. We do not suppose, that God made Christ ours, that it might be in our Power to deliver him up, as you suggest we think he did; we are very far from thinking so, and are as far from saying any thing that implies it. *

* Socin. *de Servat*. P. 3, Cap. 2.

***S*. 2.** *I hope it will be proved, that Christ could not satisfy for us*. ***C*.** You hope then, to demonstrate, that our Salvation could not be effected by the Sufferings and Death of Christ. This is impious Language! you hope to subvert the Foundation of the Hope and Comfort of Christians, and it will be a peculiar Satisfaction to you; to deprive them of the solid Ground they have to expect the Pardon of their Sins,

through the Atonement of their only Redeemer! What Title therefore, can you have to be reckoned among the Number of them? Sir, let us hear your strong Arguments to demolish our Hopes of Salvation through Jesus Christ. *S*. I will; they are these, (1.) *It is contrary to Justice to punish an innocent Man in the Room of the guilty*. ***C.*** 1. It is so among Men: because they cannot make the innocent Man and the guilty become one in a legal Sense, 2. They have not Power over the Life, Limbs, or Ease of an innocent Person. 3. He hath no such Power. Consequently, 4. They may not require him to suffer, nor has he a Power to agree to suffer corporally for any Person, who is a Delinquent. 5. But God had Power over the innocent Jesus, and might will, that he should suffer and die, and Christ had Power over his own Life, and might agree to lay it down, and actually did agree to resign it for us. And by Consequence, there was nothing of Injustice in it, (2.) *Eternal Death was what we owed, according to the Constitution of God in his Law, and therefore, Christ could not pay that Debt*. ***C.*** 1. The Eternity of our Punishment arises from our Incapacity to suffer what is due in a limited Time, and our unworthiness who suffer Penalty. 2. Infinite Value attended the Sufferings of Christ, arising from the infinite Dignity of his Person, and therefore, a Satisfaction was given by his Sufferings, to Law and Justice, though they were short in Duration, and they became hereby available to the Salvation of Multitudes. ***S.*** 3. *Christ's Obedience and Death were not both necessary, nor can they consist together, for if we are reckoned to have performed the whole of what*

the Law requires, by or in Christ, we must necessarily be innocent, and there can be no need of his suffering Punishment. On the other Hand, if he, by his Death, fully satisfied for our Sins, we must be thought to be just in consequence of that Satisfaction. ***C.*** 1. The Obedience of Christ satisfies the Law for our not being what we ought to be, *viz.* righteous, and makes us so as it is imputed to us. 2. His Death is a Satisfaction to the Law for our being what we ought not to be, *viz.* Sinners, and both these are necessary in order to our Pardon and Acceptance. The former makes us just, and the latter discharges us of Guilt, and they are perfectly consistent. ***S.*** (4.) *Christ did not suffer what we suffer, or are liable to suffer for our Sins, viz. a Desperation of the Favor of God.* ***C.*** That can only attend endless Punishment; it is not essential to divine Punishment to despair of the Favor of God; though it necessarily attends perpetual Penalty and the Knowledge that the suffering Punishment, will have no End. ***S.*** (5.) *What you call Punishment was not so, viz. the Sufferings of Christ.* ***C.*** This is false, 1. He suffered in the Stead of Sinners; *the Just suffered for the unjust.* 2. Christ suffered for Sin, he *was made Sin,* and *the Iniquity of us all was laid on him,* and his Sufferings were inflicted on him in Relation to the Charge of our Guilt to him. 3. He was made a Curse in dying. 4. The Sword of divine Justice smote him.

These Things fully prove, that his Sufferings were of a penal Nature. ***S.*** (6.) *Then the most light Suffering of Christ would*

have been equal go the Value of the most grievous of ours, and would have been sufficient. ***C.*** When we say, that the Sufferings of Christ were of infinite Value, we still maintain, that he was obliged, as our Surety, to suffer that Curse our Sins demerited, that he must die, and in dying be made a Curse. Suffering this Penalty was necessary, and in order to Satisfaction an infinite Value was necessarily required to attend his Sufferings. His divine Nature gave Worth to the Sufferings of his human; but it did not excuse or render unnecessary those penal Sufferings of the human Nature. ***S.*** (7). *What Christ suffered hath not greater Efficacy than the Sufferings of a mere Man*. ***C.*** This is false; If an Offense is attended with greater Demerit, that is committed against God, than an Offense done against a mere Man, for the same Reason, the Sufferings of one who is God as well as Man, must have greater, yea infinitely greater Value and Efficacy, than the Sufferings of a mere Creature can possibly have. ***S.*** 8. *In no other manner can this infinite Value be attributed to those Things which Christ suffered, except because he is the eternal God. But Christ could not, as the eternal God, suffer any Thing. Wherefore, it is of no Weight to give infinite Efficacy to his Sufferings, that he is the eternal God, for it is not sufficient, that Christ who suffered, was the eternal God, unless also he had suffered as the eternal God*. ***C.*** This is most false, for it supposes, that the Action of him who is in his Person infinite, is nothing better than the Action of a mere Creature, except that Nature which is infinite, be the Subject of the Action. ***S.*** (9.) *Let us suppose, that Christ really*

suffered in his divine Nature. ***C.*** I detest the Supposition, and you, Sir, advance it with no other View than to expose the Doctrine, I defend, to Contempt: But you become contemptible in supposing this, which is thought by none, and is most foreign to the Reasoning we use on this Subject. ***S.*** (10.) *Then Christ satisfied himself, or paid himself what was his Due*. ***C.*** 1. The Person to whom the Satisfaction is given, was the Father, as our supreme and righteous Judge. 2. The Person who paid the Debt was the Son, as our Mediator and Surety. 3. It is no Absurdity to say, that this Satisfaction was given to the Father, to the Son and to the holy Spirit, as the one God essentially considered; though it was given in or by the Person of the Son, who took our Nature upon him to that End. ***S.*** (11.) *Calvin denies that Christ merited*. ***C.*** Sir, you mistake him, he denies not, that Merit attended the Obedience and Sufferings of Christ; but denies, that he merited that, which rendered him a Subject capable of meriting, and that Glory which is consequent upon it, *viz*. his Union with the Son of God. ***S.*** (12.) *Christ was obliged to obey the Law for himself, and therefore, his Obedience cannot justify others*. ***C.*** He was made under the Law for others, and not for himself, or not to procure for himself a Title to Happiness and Glory, and therefore, he obeyed for others, to acquire for them a Right to Life. And he was the Surety and Representative of all those Persons, on whose Account he was made under the Law, hence it is, that his Righteousness is imputed to them all, and is available to the Justification of each of them. ***S.*** Again asserted, that *Calvin*

denied that Christ merited any thing of God for us, and produced some of his Words to prove it; which were principally these; *Christ could not merit any thing, except of the good Pleasure of God*. ***C.*** That is to say, it was the good Pleasure of God to ordain the Man Christ Jesus, to such a Union with the eternal Word, as rendered him a proper and capable Subject of meriting; his Merit therefore, if we trace it up to the Fountain, we must allow it is the divine good Pleasure; but it by no means follows from hence, that real and true Merit did not attend what Christ did and suffered. It is one thing to say, that Christ became capable of meriting, by Virtue of the Decree of God, and another to deny, that he had true and real Merit; the former *Calvin* indeed affirms, the latter it does not appear that he ever thought it, the contrary he asserts, you very well know Sir. ***S.*** I do; But they are not to be *reconciled,* for they are *repugnant*. ***C.*** *Calvin* observes, that *subordinate things are not opposite*. ***S.*** *This Rule does not take away the Repugnancy of these two things*. *For here is nothing subordinate*; *but the mutually Opposites are expressed of the same time and concerning the same things*. *

* Socin. *de Servat*. P. 3, Cap. 4, 5, 6. Calvin. *Institut*. *Lib*. 2. Cap. 16, 17.

C. Sir, you grossly mistake. 1. *Calvin* does not say, that it is the Will of God, that is the proximate Cause of the Merit of Christ; this he maintains is the Dignity of his Person, though he considers the divine Will as the first and original Cause of

that Merit, in as much as it is the Result of the divine Will, that he is able to merit. 2. The Obedience and Death of Christ are not the meritorious moving Cause of God's Will to save us, for his Obedience and Death are Effects thereof. 3. They are the procuring Cause of the things willed, *viz*. Our Justification and eternal Salvation. And between these things there is not the least Repugnancy, nor did *Calvin* think, or say there is. *C*. My Opinion of the Satisfaction of Christ receives evident Proof from various Testimonies of Scripture. 1. *Sin was said on Christ, be bore our Sins in his own Body on the Tree*. He was *made Sin for us*. 2. He suffered and died for us. *The Just suffered for the unjust*. He *loved us and gave himself for us*: When we *were without Strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*. 3. He suffered that Curse from which we enjoy a Deliverance in consequence of his Death. He suffered and died for out Sins. Our Saviour *redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us*. And, therefore, it is asserted, That *he put away Sin* — that *he purged our Sins* — that his *Blood cleanseth from all Sin* — that *by one Offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified* — That *Peace* is made *by the Blood of his Cross* — that *he is the Propitiation for our Sins* — that *when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by his Death* — that *there is no Condemnation to them that are in him — that we shall be saved from Wrath through him*. A Discharge from Guilt, Freedom from Condemnation, and Security from divine Vengeance, all follow upon the Death of Christ, as the certain and immediate Effects of it, and therefore, it must

have been satisfactory for our Offenses. Sir, you can't but own said ***C.*** to ***S.*** that the Texts I have produced will bear the Construction I put upon them, without any Violence. ***S.*** could not deny that; but declared himself thus, *Truly though it was not once, but often expressed in the sacred Pages* (*Satisfaction*); *yet I should not therefore believe, that the Matter really is as ye think it*. For since that cannot really be, I do not otherwise in many other Testimonies of Scripture, yea with all others than with one, some Interpretation, which seem, less improper, being advanced, I choose that Sense out of Words of this sort, which is both consistent with itself, and is not opposite to the constant Tenor of the same Scripture. *

* Socin. *de Servat*. P. 3, Cap. 6.

S. declaring himself so plainly, there is the less need to acquaint the Reader, with what unnatural Interpretations, he put upon the various Texts, ***C.*** produced to support his Opinion of the Satisfaction of Christ, and with the Answers which ***C.*** gave to them. Besides, to do this, would, I fear, carry me to a much greater Length, than I intended in my Narrative of this Debate. Farther, the Reader may judge whether there is a Necessity for a different Exposition, to be given of those Texts from that of ***C's.*** If Christ's Satisfaction is a possible thing there is not: *S*. himself seems to grant that, and therefore, if ***C's*** Answers to ***S.*** are but sufficient to prove the Possibility of the thing, his Sense of those Texts ought to stand, ***S.*** himself being Judge. This I leave with the Reader to

determine of, for himself, ***A.*** and ***B.*** objected to the Sentiments of ***C.*** concerning the Doctrine of Satisfaction, neither of them would allow, that Christ paid the same that was due from us. ***A.*** repeated several of the Objections of ***S.*** *viz. That Christ did not suffer eternal Death that the Love of God is the Fountain of Salvation that Remission of Sin is a gratuitous Act of divine Mercy*. All which ***C.*** had before answered. *

* Curcell, p. 300, 301. Limborch, p. 270, 271.

B. I cannot allow, that Christ paid the same which was due from us, because then no Conditions could be required of us in order to an *actual Freedom from the Obligation, that cannot consist with Payment, and complete Payment is not reusable*; *but Christ's was*. ***C.*** 1. As an Effect of divine Love and Sovereignty, a Commutation is admitted, Christ's Name is put into the Obligation, as a Surety for us, instead of ours. 2. But though there is a Change of Persons, there is not of what is demanded in the Obligation. Christ paid what was due from us, though as to some Circumstances his Sufferings were different from ours. We stood obliged to suffer the Law's Curse, and that Christ endured in our Room. And, therefore, his Sufferings were a proper Payment of our Debt. Here was *true Solution,* which gave a present Being to our Right of Freedom from the Obligation, though we had not the Knowledge of our Right, nor were able to plead it. 3. What you contend for, *viz. Acceptation,* if you will believe

the *Civilians, frees from the Obligation, as well as full and perfect Payment*. *

* Vinni. in Instit. p. 659.

4. It is just, that it should so do in the Infliction of corporal Punishment, on an innocent Person for the Guilty; for if the guilty Person is not cleared, but remains or comes afresh under the Obligation, and suffers Punishment, his Sponsor sustains an irreparable Injury, which is contrary to Right. And, therefore, it is a false Supposition which you make *of the Return of pardoned Guilt*. *

* Appendix to Aphorisms p. 49, 50. *Method*. *Theolog*. P. 3, p. 339.

5. This Commutation was reusable, God might have insisted on our suffering the Penalty and not have accepted of the Engagement of a Surety; but this Change of Persons in the Obligation proves no Change in what was demanded and paid in order to our Discharge. 6. You must deny the Reality of the Satisfaction of Christ, if you will maintain this Sin is not taken away Freedom from the Curse of the Law is not obtained — Security from Wrath is not effected by the Death of Christ — Peace or Reconciliation is not made by the Blood of Christ. ***B.*** *Each of these Things is done on the Part of the Surety*; *but the actual Possession of them depends upon the Performance of a certain Condition, agreed by God*

and Christ our Surety, viz. taking of Christ or believing in him. *

f194 * Baxter's Appendix to Aphorisms, etc. p. 140, 153.

C. Either that is a possible or impossible Condition. If it is an impossible Condition, no Advantage arises to Sinners from the Death of our Saviour. ***B.*** It is a possible Condition. ***C.*** How does that appear? ***B.*** Thus; God affords such Help to Men, as is sufficient to enable them to perform that Condition. ***C.*** Does God regenerate and give Faith to them in order to the Act? ***B.*** No, but he gives such Grace as is sufficient to Regeneration, and to enable them to believe if they will. ***C.*** Can Men repent, believe in Christ, love God, hate Sin, and perform Acts of evangelical Obedience, before they are regenerated? ***B.*** I suppose you mean by these Enquiries, to prove, that Grace as a Habit is infused, and that the Infusion of the Habit, is prior to the Act. ***C.*** I do. ***B.*** That I deny. ***C.*** By this, I think, we are naturally led to discourse of the Work of Regeneration, or of the Production of Faith in the Hearts of Men, by the Exertion of the Almighty Power of God. **V.** ***S., A., B.*** We are so. It seems you think said they to ***C.*** that the Habit of Faith is infused. ***C.*** That is my firm Opinion: ***S.*** *I cannot persuade my self of the Truth of that.* *

* Socin. *de Servat.* P. 4, Cap. 12.

A. Neither can I think, that Faith, Hope, and Love, are infused of God. 1. *Because Faith comes by hearing Romans* 10. ***C.*** That may respect the Act in Consequence of the Infusion of the Habit of Faith. The Word directs to the Act, to the Object on which it acts, and to the Fruits of that Act; but the Habit is not produced by Hearing. 2.*God commands us to be endowed with Faith, Hope, and Love, and therefore, he will not immediately infuse them into us*. *

* Curcell. p. 169.

C. 1. It is a Mistake, that God commands these Habits. They are supernatural, and what is so, God does not Command. 2. Nor does he require such Acts of Men, as flow from these supernatural Principles, until the Infusion of those Principles. ***B.*** *I once apprehended through Mr*. Pemble, *that the Habit precedes the Act*; *but upon second Thoughts, I return to the common Opinion*. *For God in his Operations, does not ordinarily violate the Order of Nature*. ***C.*** It is pity you did not retain your former Sentiment, in this Point. You mistake Sir, in calling it the common Opinion: All *Calvinists* reject it; *Socinians* and *Arminians* indeed assert it, with whom you agree in many Particulars besides this. The Inflation of these Habits is not a Violation of the Order of Nature. They are supernatural, and what is so, must necessarily be infused, it cannot be acquired.

Gentlemen, the Reasons on which I found my Opinion, are there, 1. A Man must be made good, before he can put forth good Acts; such as the Acts of believing, hoping in, and loving of God are. Unless the Tree is made good, it cannot bring forth good Fruit. 2. Faith and Repentance are the Gifts of God. What is acquired is not given; and therefore, these Graces are infused, and not acquired. 3. Until these Habits take Place in the Hearts of Men, they have an Aversion to those Acts that flow from those Principles; and, consequently, they cannot put forth such Acts. 4. If we acquire these Dispositions, by our own Acts, tho' it is as we are assisted by divine Grace, we make ourselves to differ from others. And the Reason why *Peter* believed, when *Judas* did not, was owing to himself principally, which is false. 5. A regenerate Person is the Subject of two Principles, Holiness and Sin. A *Law* in his *Mind,* and a *Law* in his *Members*. The latter which is called *Flesh, serves the Law of Sin,* and that only: The former *serves the Law of God,* and only that; and, by Consequence, so long as he is not the Subject of the former, he cannot repent, believe, or love God, neither hate Sin. 6. It is either possible, or it is impossible, for a Man, in an unregenerate State, to believe, repent, and love God. If it is possible, then an unregenerate Man may believe and repent, and Regeneration is not necessary. If it is impossible, then a Man must be regenerated, before he can do either of these Things; and Regeneration must be by the Infusion of gracious Habits into the Heart. 7. If gracious Acts precede gracious Habits, then those Acts are done without

any Delight or Pleasure: For it is only the *inner* Man that delights in the Law of God. ***S.*** *Tho' I deny the Infusion of Habits of Grace, yet I freely grant, that the Holy Spirit operates as a Sanctifier, Comforter and Witness, an the Minds of Men, an order to excite and move them to the Practice of Holiness*; *but so as to preserve the Liberty of the Will*. Crellius on the Spirit. ***A.*** *Tho' I cannot be persuaded to think, that Habits are injured, yet I allow of a gracious Influence upon the Mind to stir it up to, and facilitate the Practice of Duty. — That Grace is always precedaneous, present, and subsequent, and that we can do nothing that is good, without the Assistance of divine Grace*. ***B.*** *I do not dissent from what S. and A. have expressed concerning divine Assistance afforded to Men in the Performance of Good. I use to call it all necessary, Help, or Grace* ad esse. Baxter's *Catholic Theology,* pag. 145, *and Method. Theolog*. Pars 3, pag. 274. We neither of us deny a divine Operation on the Mind; by which the Will is excited and stirred up to choose what is good and agreeable to the Will of God: Only we cannot think, that it is necessarily determined to act, by an irresistible Influence upon it; because that would deprive it of its natural Liberty in acting; and Men must be considered as involuntary in the Good they do, thro' this irresistible Almighty Influence upon them, which it is absurd to think. **C.** I observe, *Gentlemen,* that you are more modest in speaking on this Subject; particularly, with Relation to the Infusion of good Habits, than is usual with you, and you seem to have very little to object to it. ***A.*** has offered two

Reasons against it; both which have been, as I think, fully answered. If this single Point against which you have so little to object can but be proved, all I desire to maintain, will unavoidably be established; and the Liberty of the human Will, must be allowed to be preserved. Now, besides, the Reasons I before offered to confirm my Opinion, of the Infusion of gracious Habits or Principles, which, I apprehend, are sufficient; some Testimonies of Scripture, in Favor of it, you may permit me to produce. The first is {Jeremiah. 32:40}. *I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart from me*. It is one Thing to excite Men to a Reverence of God; and another to put or implant a Fear and Reverence of him in their Hearts; and it is the latter that is promised in this Scripture.

The second is {Ezekiel. 36:25-26}. *A new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the Heart of Stone out of your Flesh, and I will give you an Heart of Flesh*. This Testimony is so full to the Purpose, that nothing can be said which will stifle its Evidence in Favor of the Truth for which I plead. By the Heart of Flesh must be intended a holy Disposition to what is good, and if such a Disposition is given of God, it necessarily follows, that it is infused or implanted of him, for in no other Sense can it be a Gift. This is not a Promise to excite and stir up the Mind to Good, but it is a Promise to give a Disposition to what is good. ***A.*** *The Heart of Stone consisted with the Freedom of the Will*. ***C.*** So does this

giving of a Heart of Flesh. And in Consequence of the Inflation of this holy Disposition, Good is freely chosen. And as the Will is not actively concerned in the Reception of what is infused; so it opposes not that Infusion of good Habits, it holds itself entirely passive therein. ***A.*** *This is promised to the whole House of* Israel. ***C.*** That is a Mistake; it is only promised to those, who were included in the new Covenant, *Hebrews* 8. *viz*. the Elect of God; *they were not all* Israel, *who were* of Israel, *neither because they were of the Seed of* Abraham, *were they all Children*. The old Covenant comprised all the *Israelites,* not so the new Covenant; this Promise belongs to the new, and not to the old Covenant; and, therefore, it is made to a select Number of that People only. ***A.*** *This Promise was not fulfilled 'till alter many Days, appears from {*Jeremiah. 31:3*}, a parallel Place with this*. ***C.*** This is most evidently false; for in all Ages, some among that People were saved: None of them could be saved by the old Covenant; they, as we now are, were saved by the new Covenant; and, consequently, the Promises of the new Covenant related to them, and were fulfilled in them. That respects the fuller Manifestation of the new Covenant, when the old Covenant *vanished* away, and no longer continued in Force. ***A.*** *God ascribes some Effects to himself, when he doth those Things, which are required on his Part, and have a singular Efficacy to produce the Effects*: *Altho' they do not follow because of the desperate Malice or Evil of Men, {*Ezekiel. 24:13; Ho 7:1; 2:1-2,3*}*. *

* Limborch pag. 384, 385.

C. It as trifling to talk at this Rate; God either infuses, or he does not infuse good Dispositions; that is the Thing promised; and, as was before observed, the Will of Man is not actively concerned in it, he neither wills it, nor nills it. The Texts referred to, do not speak of a Work of God upon Men, wherein they are passive; but of outward Means used with them for Reformation, which is most foreign to our present Subject.

Let the third Testimony be, those Scriptures which speak of Faith and Repentance as divine Gifts, and deny that Faith is of ourselves, and assert that we make not ourselves to differ, and which affirm that our new Birth is of God, exclusively of any other Cause. To stir up a Man to believe and repent, is not to give him Faith and Repentance. It is the Infusion of those Graces only, that can properly denominate them Gifts. To assist Men in acquiring of those Graces, is not giving them. ***C.*** added, *Gentlemen,* since there is such strong Evidence given in Favor of my Opinion, of the Infusion of gracious Principles into the Hearts of Men: And since you have so little to object to it, and what you do object is capable of so clear Answers, I hope you will no longer oppose it. If you grant this one thing, indeed, you will deprive your selves of many of your Objections, against my Sentiments concerning the Nature of the divine Influences on

the Minds of Men, which, perhaps, may occasion you to decline granting it, though it by no Means ought. If this is allowed then, 1. It will follow, that Men are active in reforming from Vice, according to my Opinion, which you deny, and charge me with holding the contrary. For what I maintain is, that we are passive in the Reception of those heavenly Principles; but, that we are active in doing Good in consequence of the Infusion of those gracious Habits. 2. It appears from hence, that God certainly works in an irresistible Manner upon us, without destroying our Free Agency. For, (1.) It is not lost in the Infusion of these Principles, because the Will is not, nor can be concerned in the Infusion of them. It neither wills, nor nills, in this gracious Act of God upon us, (2.) Upon the Infusion of those Principles, we are excited and stirred up by the Grace of God to act what he has given us a Disposition unto, which is not doing any Violence to our Will, it is only directing and moving of it towards such Objects and such Acts, which it hath a Biass and Disposition towards, as it is sanctified by the blessed Spirit. ***D.*** Now spoke again, and declared, that he was convinced thoroughly of his Prejudices against Christianity, and expressed a great deal of Pleasure, that he had an Opportunity of hearing the Principles of the Christian Religion so freely debated, and so fully cleared of the Objections raised against them. Whereupon ***A.*** said to ***D.*** Sir, do not yet conclude upon the Truth of the Principles of ***C.*** for I have many Things to object to his Opinion of the final Perseverance of the Saints, which I am persuaded he will not

be able to answer; and if those Objections should prove unanswerable, all that he has advanced concerning Election, the Satisfaction of Christ, and Justification by his Righteousness must necessarily be given up: this perhaps has not occurred to your Thoughts, and therefore, you express your self in the manner you do. ***D.*** Sir, if ***C.*** pleases to enter upon that Subject, I promise diligently to attend to your Objections against that Doctrine, as well as to the Answers of ***C.*** to those Objections, and his Arguments in Favor of it, and shall endeavor to form my Judgment concerning that Point, which I clearly discern, is of great Importance, with the utmost Impartiality. ***A.*** You say well, Sir. ***C.*** I will first Rate my Opinion in this Matter, then hear your Objections, and return Answers, and advance some Arguments to prove what I assert, and endeavor to vindicate those Arguments from your Exceptions. ***A.*** The Method you propose to take, I approve of very well.

VI. ***C.*** My Opinion is this, that Persons who are the Subjects of Regeneration, never fall into an unregenerate State, though they may be guilty of many Miscarriages, to the Dishonor of God and to their own great Distress: Or that those gracious Habits which are infused into them at the time of their Regeneration, are never lost, though the Exercise of their Graces may be greatly interrupted. ***A.*** *That a regenerate Person may sink into an unregenerate State, or fall from his Righteousness*; *I thus prove,* **1.** *From what is expressed in* Ezekiel 18, *to that Purpose*. ***C.*** I deny, that the Righteousness

there spoken of, intends Sanctification, or that the righteous Man there mentioned, is a regenerate sanctified Person. (1.) It is no other Righteousness than what was required in the Law of *Moses*, as a Condition of enjoying temporal Peace and Affluence, which is there designed. (2). It is spoken on Occasion of the *Jews* murmuring under their Afflictions, in a Civil Sense, and is intended to obviate those Objections which they advanced against the righteous Dispensations of God in his Providence, agreeable to the Nature of that Covenant, in which they were included as a Nation. (3.) The Righteousness required in that Covenant entitled them to temporal Favors; but not to eternal Blessings. And therefore, (4.) It is not evangelical Righteousness, that is there spoken of, nor is the righteous Man mentioned in that Place, a regenerate sanctified Person, and therefore, this Instance entirely fails of proving what it is offered as a Proof of.

2. *A. From {*Matthew. 13:19-20*}*. ***C.*** Those Persons who fall away are compared to stony Ground, to a Rock, and therefore, they have not a Heart of Flesh given them, the Worst has no Root in them, they stand distinguished from Persons, who have honest and good Hearts, here we must conclude, that such a Heart they have not, and consequently, they are not regenerate Persons. Nor is it said, that in a time of Temptation they receive the Word, but in that time they quit a Regard to it. ***A.*** *The third Instance I bring to prove the Possibility of the total Apostacy of the Saints, is {*Hebrews. 6:4-5,6*} and {*Hebrews. 10:26*}. C.* Some have interpreted the former of true Believers; but have apprehended, that not a

final Falling is intended, but a Backsliding, which true Believers may be guilty of, and that not the Impossibility of their Renewal unto Repentance is design'd, but the Impossibility of their renewing themselves unto Repentance, is the thing asserted; and if this is the Sense of the Text, it affords no Argument in Favour of the Opinion of the total and final Apostasy of the Saints. See Mr. *Matthias Maurice's* Discourse on the Place. He seems in my Opinion indeed to be a little too positive in his Exposition of the Words, and I think, is guilty of some Mistakes. *He asserts, that a more glorious Description of true Believers is not to be found in all the Gospel*. This is carrying the Matter very far I own. Perhaps, those Words of the Apostle may justly be thought to contain a more certain and glorious Description of the Saints, than this Text expresses: *But ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*. Here is not a Word said of these Persons, *being washed from Sin, or of their being justified, or of their being sanctified by the blessed Spirit*. Besides, he is, I think, mistaken in asserting *that* metanoia *always signifies evangelical Repentance,* it hath not that Sense in {Matthew. 12:41}. where the *Ninevites are said to have repented at the preaching of Jonah*. Another Mistake of his is, that paradeigmateizein, which we render *put to open Shame, is of indifferent Signification, that it may be taken in a good or bad Sense*. The Septuagint use it in {Numbers. 25:4}, and {Jeremiah. 23:22}, and {Ezekiel. 28:17}, in all which Places, it signifies to expose to Shame, Reproach and

Contempt. And they have never used it in a good Sense. In *Matthew* 1 and 19 the Word is used, where it must be interpreted in the like Sense. To assert without any Instance to prove, what is asserted, carries very little Evidence or Authority in it; besides, as *the Son of God* is nor expressed, which is *his Observation,* neither is the Term themselves mentioned, which he *supplies,* and that supply does not seem very natural, nor can it, I think, be admitted of, the Son of God, immediately before spoken of, is, I apprehend, to be understood, he whom those Persons are said to *crucify to themselves a- fresh, they put to open Shame*. Again to act Faith on Christ, as a crucified Saviour, *can't be called a crucifying him*; but to approve of the Jews *Conduct in crucifying him,* as an Impostor, is properly a crucifying him, afresh to a Man's self, or in his Mind, which the Apostle seems to design. Another Mistake is, this *Gentleman* observes, *that Briars* and *Thorns* in the 7th ver. *intend the sinful Works of Believers which are to be burnt* up: But hv agrees not with akanqa and tribolov but with Gh *the Earth, that will be burnt up*. Which is a strong Objection against his Interpretation. For, by this the inspired Writer expresses the certain Destruction of the Persons concerning whom he speaks, and not the consuming of their Works. And, therefore, Believers, I think, cannot be intended in this Text: But such Persons, who bring forth no Fruit that is acceptable to God, tho' their Knowledge and Gifts are extraordinary. The *Illumination* spoken of, only intends, as I apprehend, an Acquaintance with evangelical Truths, in a notional Way.

Tasting of the heavenly Gift, i.e. the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, intends some Experience, not of his Graces, but of his extraordinary and miraculous Gifts, which were in those Times afforded, in Confirmation of the Gospel: And this, I conceive, is explained by these Persons, *being said to be made Partakers of the Holy Ghost*: Not of his Graces, but of his Gifts; for this Phrase seems to be exegetical of the former. *Tasting of the good Word of God,* intends some Experience of the Power of that Word; but not in a gracious spiritual Manner, or feeding upon it, and receiving spiritual Nourishment from it, as those who eat and digest the Truths of it do. Tasting sometimes stands opposed to receiving, *when he had tasted, he would not drink*. By *the Powers of the World to come,* are not intended the Joys of Heaven: For the World to come, designs the New Testament State. *God hath not put in Subjection to Angels, the World to come, viz.* the New Testament Church. The Powers of that World or State, are those extraordinary Gifts bestowed, and those miraculous Works performed, for the Confirmation of the Religion of Jesus, mentioned in {Matthew. 2:3}. *God also bearing them Witness with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will.* Tasting of those Powers, means an Experience of such surprising Effects existing, by seeing them wrought, and having Power to produce them, from the Holy Spirit, which some Unbelievers had an Experience of. *Many will say unto me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out Devils? And in thy*

Name have done many wonderful Works: *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work Iniquity*. In these Persons is Illumination, or an Acquaintance with the Gospel, so far as to be able to preach it to others. They have an Experience of the heavenly Gift, *i.e*. of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: And, therefore, they may be said to be Partakers of the Holy Ghost. They have some Experience of the Power of the Word, tho' not in a spiritual Manner, and of the Power of the New Testament Church, whereby the Gospel is confirmed. And all these Things without the Graces of Faith, Hope, or Love, *etc*.

Farther, the Apostle *Paul* supposes, that there may be Eloquence, Illumination, or *an Understanding of all Mysteries, all Knowledge,* that there may be *all Faith, i.e*. of working Miracles; that there may be *Benevolence,* and a Readiness *suffer Death,* without the Grace of *Love* in the Heart, which seem to me, as great Things, as any here expressed; and, therefore, all these Things may be true of unregenerate Persons. *Tho' I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal. And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing. And tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and tho' I give my Body to be burned, and have no Charity, it profiteth me nothing*. If Persons, who possessed that Knowledge of Christianity, and

those extraordinary Gifts by which it was confirmed, to be of divine Original, fell away from it, and *despised* and *reviled* the great Author of it: It was impossible to renew them again to Repentance, *i.e*. it was not agreeable to the Will of God, to give them Repentance, or to reclaim them from that their wilful and malicious Opposition to the Gospel. This I take to be the true Sense of the Apostle in this Text. 1. Then we learn, that no Person whether regenerate, or unregenerate, can be guilty of that dreadful Sin, with all its Aggravations, in this Day, which the Apostle there treats of. And, consequently, 2. The Words can furnish us out with no Argument to prove the final Apostasy of the Saints. To which Purpose, Sir, you have produced them. The other Text in {Matthew. 10:26}, expresses much the same Sense. *Sinning* there intends a Renunciation of the Gospel, as here falling away designs it. The *Sanctification* of the Person sinning is not meant, but the Sanctification of Christ, who *sanctified himself for our Sakes,* that we *might be sanctified by divine Truth*. ***A.*** *Let the fourth Instance be, {*2Peter. 2:19-20,21-22}. ***C.*** The Persons there spoken of, were outwardly reformed; but not inwardly sanctified. As the Dog is the same in his Nature and Disposition, when thro' any Cause he abstains from his Vomit: And as the Sow that is washed, is the same in her Nature and Disposition; so are those Persons the very same in their Nature and Disposition, notwithstanding this Change in their Conduct. They are not *Sons*; but *Dogs*: They are not *Sheep*; but *Swine*: And, therefore, nothing can from hence be concluded against the certain Perseverance of the

Saints. And the Apostasy of these Persons is attended with very aggravating Circumstances. For they sin against much Knowledge, and clear Convictions of Conscience. ***A.*** *I have Examples to produce,* 1. David. ***C.*** That holy Man sinned grievously indeed; but that is no Proof of the Loss of the Habits of Grace in him, tho' it is of those Habits, for that Time, not exerting themselves. Your Reasoning supposes, that upon a regenerate Man's sinning, he sinks into a State of Unregeneracy; if that is true, then *the Friend of God, the Father of the faithful,* became unregenerate; and also *Job,* and *Jeremiah,* and *Hezekiah,* and *Jonah,* and *Peter, etc*. which is false. If this is proved, it must be either from an Act of Sin itself, or from some other Principle. If from an Act of Sin itself, then it will follow, that an Act of Sin cannot consist with Regeneration, which is most certainly false, for *in many Things we offend all*. If from other Principles, it is weak and impertinent to argue from the sinful Act. And other Principles you have not to prove it from. Except God's immutable and inseparable Love, the Stability of the Covenant of Grace, the Efficacy of Christ's Death, the Justification of the Persons of the Saints by his Righteousness, the Spirit's Abode with them for ever, Christ's prevalent Intercession with the Father for them, that *their Faith fail not,* can be the Principles from which such Proof may be fetched, which I should think, it is evident they are not. These Things are a sufficient Answer to your second Example, *viz. Solomon*. ***A.*** *The third Example is* Hymeneus *and* Alexander, *who made Shipwreck of Faith, and a good*

Conscience. ***C.*** This respects their acting contrary to the Convictions of Conscience, thro' the Influence of corrupt Principles and Prejudices, which unregenerate Men often do, in an Opposition to the Gospel, not admitting the clearest Evidence, to be sufficient Proof of the Truth of those Doctrines, that approve not themselves to their vitiated Taste. ***A.*** *The fourth Example is* Demas, {2Timothy. 4:10}. ***C.*** 1. *Demas* might be a Minister, and yet not be a Believer. *Judas* was a Minister, but he was not a regenerate Person. 2. He might thro' too much Love to the Things of this World, be influenced to desert his Service in the Church, at least for a Time, and yet not loose those Principles of Grace, which were implanted in his Heart, if it must be concluded that he was a Believer. *Jonah* declined his Duty thro' Pride, without the Loss of gracious Principles in his Heart. And *Demas* might so do, thro' Covetousness, without such a Loss. ***A.*** *Divine Exhortations, Threatenings, and Promises, are in vain, except Believers may fall away from their Faith and Holiness*. ***C.*** Sir, you are very much mistaken: For, 1. Tho' the Certainty of the Perseverance of true Believers, is a Truth; none have Reason to conclude, that they are such, but those whose Hearts are disposed to Piety and Holiness. 2. Some may make a Profession of Faith, and fall from that Profession; the Things expressed are singularly useful to excite us to a due Consideration, whether we are Subjects of true Faith or not. 3. This is a Perseverance not in Sin, but in Holiness: If, therefore, *Peter* denies his Lord with dreadful Aggravations, in that Circumstance, it not his Business to be

easy and unconcerned, notwithstanding his grievous Crimes; but his proper Business is to mourn, and humble himself before God for his Sin; and unless he so does, he has no Evidence of Grace in his Heart; and, consequently, it would be a Contradiction in him to conclude upon his Perseverance in Holiness. These Things, therefore, are of great Use to guard the Saints from sinning, and to excite them to evangelical Repentance, when they have sinned. 4. Hence it appears, that they are proper Means to preserve in the Saints, Watchfulness, spiritual Diligence, and to prevent carnal Confidence and Presumption in all Professors, and contain nothing inconsistent with the precious Truth of the certain Perseverance of the People of God. 5. No Man can be assured of Perseverance, but in the Use of the Means appointed of God to that End, and which he will undoubtedly bless, and render effectual. When *Hezekiah* was promised Life, it gave him no Ground to imagine, that his Life would be preferred without Food, or tho' he should drink Poison. And God's Promises to preserve the Saints to his Kingdom and Glory, do not imply, that they may neglect the Means he has directed to, in order to promote Holiness in them, or that they may venture on such Practices, as tend to the Ruin of their Souls. ***A.*** Now, Sir, I shall answer your Arguments for your Opinion, and you have produced a large Catalogue of Scriptures, {Jeremiah. 32:39-40; Isaiah. 54:10; 59:21; Hosea. 2:19; Psalm 125:1; John 4:14,24; 6:35,37,39,44,56-57; 10:27-28; Matthew 16:18. ***C.*** These are not all the Scriptures by many, wherein my Sentiments,

relating to this Point are expressed. But to pass that now, let me hear your Answers to them. ***A.*** *I begin with {*Jeremiah. 32:39-40}. *That cannot contain an absolute Promise of Perseverance, because it is made to all the People of Israel*. ***C.*** That is a Mistake, as I have before observed, this is a Promise of the new Covenant; all the People were not included in the new, tho' they were in the old Covenant. ***A.*** *By the Words in {*Matthew. 16:18}, *it is not promised, that the Church shall not Jail fall Faith, and so may cease to be a Church*: *But that Death shall not prevail against the Church, or that Believers shall not be held of Death, but shall be raised again from the dead to everlasting Life*. ***C.*** Our Saviour is speaking of building his Church, which respects the present State; and this Promise relates to the Church in this State; Death therefore cannot be intended. Besides adhv is several Times put for Hell, {Matthew. 11:23; Luke. 16:23}, and the Gates of Hell, design the Powers of Darkness. And this is a gracious Promise of the Church's Safety, notwithstanding all Opposition from the infernal Powers, which must necessarily include her final Perseverance. ***A.*** *{*John. 10:27-28,29*}, is to be taken in the same Sense*. *If the Sheep of Christ, do not cease to be his Sheep, they shall be happy*. ***C.*** I. Faith does not make us the Sheep of Christ, we are his Sheep, before we believe; and because we are his Sheep, we receive Faith: As others, because they are not his Sheep, receive it not. Hence our Lord says, *other Sheep I have, which are not of this Fold, them also I must bring, and there shall be one Fold, and one Shepherd*. And *ye believe*

not, because ye are not of my Sheep. 2. This puts the Security of the Sheep, not upon their being in Christ's Hand, but upon their own Will and Obedience; which is as contrary to the Words, as any Thing can be. 3. Our Lord declares, *that they shall never perish, that he gives to them eternal Life*. How then can they cease to be his Sheep? 4. If oudeiv none can pluck them out of his Hand, nor out of the Father's Hand: I desire to know, (1.)Whether they can become *Goats,* before they are out of Christ's Hand, and out of the Father's Hand? (2.) Whether Christ and the Father suffer them to drop out of their Hands; since none, neither Sin, nor Satan, nor the World, can pluck them out of their Hands? 3. Whether they do not perish, upon being let fall out of the Hand of Christ, and out of the Hand of the Father? 4. If they do perish, and enjoy not eternal Life; how will you be able to maintain the Veracity of Christ, who has said, *that they shall never perish, and that he gives to them eternal Life?* These are Questions, that I will not require a speedy Answer to, because great Difficulty attends answering them. I therefore, leave them to your farther Consideration. But pray, Sir, why do not you give some Answer to the other Texts produced in Favor of my Opinion; your flipping them over in Silence, tempts me to imagine, that you think them unanswerable. *A. I will consider some other Places of Scripture, which you allege to this Purpose*: *First, {*Matthew. 24:24}. *If possible, does not always signify Impossibility*; *but frequently the great Difficulty of a Thing*. ***C.*** Then you allow it is very difficult to deceive the Elect of God; it is therefore to be hoped, that it

does not often at least happen, if in any Instance, this does happen. Your critical Remark is trifling; for it makes no Difference, whether the Word is taken actively or passively, the same Thought is expressed. It is evidently supposed, that others would be deceived; but the very emphatical Manner in which our Lord expresses himself, according to both *Evangelists* kai touv eklektouv, also the Elect; is an evident Indication of the Impossibility of their being deceived as others are.

2. *You have urged,* {1John. 2:19}. 1. *Believers may depart from the Church at least, for a Time*. *C*. This intends a Renunciation of the Religion of Jesus Christ, at least, of its fundamental Principles from which true Believers shall be preserved. ***A.*** 2. *It does not intend that true Believers always continue with the Church*; *but only that the Believer so long as he is, and continues a Believer, does not desert the Congregation and Society of Believers, etc*. ***C.*** To be *of us,* is to be of the Number of the true Members of Christ's Church; these Persons were never such, for if they had, they would not have denied Christ; they denied the Son of God, and by the Denial of him, it appeared that they never truly believed in him; for if they had so believed, they would not have denied him; this is the plain Sense of the Text. And a strong Argument it affords us in Favour of the final Perseverance of the Saints, or of their certain Preservation from a fatal Seduction, by the Enemies of Christ, their only Saviour and Lord. ***A.*** 3. *You argue from* {Romans. 8:35,37-38,39}. *The Apostle there speaks of the Love wherewith God loved us*. ***C.***

True, he does so, and you may spare yourself the Trouble of proving a Matter, that is so very evident. ***A.*** *God viewing their Faith and Love, greatly loves them, and will deliver them out of all Afflictions, yea he will raise them from Death itself, and give to them eternal Life, this is the Sense of the Apostle in that Place*. ***C.*** 1. Then God loves us because we love him, or our Love to him is the Cause of his Love to us, which is false, for *we love him, because be first loved us*. 2. Either we may be separated from divine Love, or we cannot: To say that we may, is to contradict the Apostle; and, therefore, we cannot lose our Interest in the Grace, Love and Favour of God. 3. Hence it follows, that we shall not totally and finally fall; the Interest we have in the Love of God, will certainly prevent our total Apostasy. ***A.*** *Sin separates a Man from God, {*Isaiah. 59:1}. ***C.*** As to Communion it does for a Time; but not with Respect to an Interest in his Favor: Nor can it, without supposing a Change in God; because he always knew the Part that Man would act. ***A.*** *Nor is what you urge from {*1John. 3:9}, *a sufficient Proof of your Opinion*; *for the Term abiding, is not to be taken here in its proper Signification, as it denotes Duration and Continuance, etc*. ***C.*** Why so? What Necessity is there to understand it in an improper Sense? You do not seem to be able to assign any Reason for it; and without a Reason, I can't agree to your Assertion; because the Holy Spirit is in the Saints, *a Well of Water springing up into everlasting Life*. *Limborch* from page 712 to 726. Sir, There are many Arguments to be advanced to prove this Point, besides those you have took

some Notice of, *viz*. That the Love of God is unchangeable. — That his Purpose is unalterable. — That his Covenant is sure and inviolable, its Promises sure, and its Mercies sure. — That Sin is forgiven to the Saints through the Blood of Christ. — That they are not subject to Condemnation. — That therefore, they shall be saved from Wrath. — That they are justified or made righteous by the Obedience of Christ, and are Heirs of eternal Life. — That they are the Sons of God. — That they are Members of Christ, and cannot be separated from him. — That the holy Spirit dwells in them and will abide with them for ever. — That whom *God calls, he justifies, and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies*. That God's Faithfulness stands engaged for the complete Sanctification of the Saints. — That there is Ground of Confidence, that in whomsoever *a good Work is begun,* it shall be performed *until the Day of Christ*. — That the Intercession of Christ, that *Faith* may not *fail,* and that his People *may be with him,* in Heaven, is prevalent. — And that there is proper Foundation of strong Consolation, and a firm Persuasion of enjoying future Blessedness, in Believers. In a Word, you must either prove, that the Gospel is not true, or you must grant, that the Salvation of Believers is certain and unfrustable, thro' the Grace of God, the Redemption of Christ, and the sanctifying Influences of the blessed Spirit. ***B.*** *I cannot but in great part, be of the Mind of* ***A.*** *with respect to the Subject now under Consideration, only I think, that the Elect will finally persevere. But I apprehend, that the Perseverance of the Non-elect is not infallibly secured,*

though this, I think, that Grace sufficient to enable them to persevere, will be communicated to them of God. Baxter's Catholic Theology. B. 11, p. 215. ***C.*** 1. I demand of you to prove, that one Non-elect Person has ever believed. It is trifling to talk of their persevering in Faith, before you prove, that they are any of them Subjects of that Grace. If you do this, I promise to yield the whole Cause to you. I boldly affirm with the Apostle, that *the Election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded*. You Sir, may assert the contrary, if you please; but I am determined not to believe you, if you do. 2. No Person upon your Principle can possibly be assured of Salvation, more than upon the Principle of *A. Peter* could not, *Paul* could not, without a special Revelation from God; for though a Man may know that he is a Believer, he cannot conclude upon his Election to Salvation, because according to your Opinion, Faith is not an Evidence of an Interest in Election-Grace, for a Non-elect Person may believe, love God, repent, and hate Sin, love and desire Holiness, as you conceive, and consequently, a Man may experience all these Things, and yet have no certain Ground to conclude, that he is chosen to Salvation; he may therefore, for ought he can possibly know, be appointed to Wrath, upon God's Foresight, that he will not persevere in Faith and Holiness. His Perseverance is uncertain to him, because, though the Elect shall persevere, he has no way of knowing, whether he is one of that Number or not; his Perseverance being uncertain, he can have no certain Knowledge of his Salvation. And of course, no one Saint in the World, under any Circumstance,

could have, or can have an Assurance of his future Blessedness, according to your Opinion. This not only destroys the Foundation of that *strong Consolation,* it is the *Will of God, that the Heirs of Promise, who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope set before them,* should enjoy; but it is subversive of many of the Fundamental Doctrines of the everlasting Gospel. Of the eternal and immutable Love of the Father, Son, and Spirit. — Of the Stability of the Covenant of Grace, and really turns it into a Covenant of Works. — Of the Redemption of Christ, or of his Satisfaction, by his Sufferings and Death. — Of the effectual Operations of the blessed Spirit, upon the Minds of Men; and resolves eternal Salvation, into the Will of Man, as the principal Cause thereof, eventually, at least, and therefore, Sir, I think, your Opinion is not to be endured by Christians. Nor can it without doing great Dishonor to the Grace of God, and depriving the Saints of the solid Foundation, of their spiritual Peace, joy, and firm Hope of future Happiness.

D. *Gentlemen,* I give you my hearty Thanks for your free Conversation on the momentous Doctrines, that have come under your Consideration, I hope all my Prejudices against Revelation are fully removed. As I told you, before you entered upon this Debate, I really thought, that the Principles of ***C.*** were asserted in the Scripture, and esteeming them absurd, I could not be persuaded of the divine Authority of a Book, that recommends absurd Doctrines, by any external

Evidences, which may be pleaded in its Favor. Upon this Principle it was, that I rejected the Christian Revelation. And I assure you, that I know many of the Deists, who are in the very same Case. They plainly discern, that the Sentiments of ***C.*** are delivered in the Bible, and thinking them repugnant to Reason they cannot be perfumed, that the Scripture is a Revelation from God. As to the Objections which are advanced against the Word of God, by the *Author* of the *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion,* and other Writers of his Stamp, they are of very little Weight; and would have as little Influence, upon the Minds of many of the Deists, to prejudice them against Revelation, if they were not prepossessed with an Opinion of the Absurdity of its peculiar Doctrines: I mean those Principles, which ***C.*** has advanced and defended; I mull beg Leave to say, to my full Satisfaction, for they are sensible, that those Principles, really are contained in the Writings of the Old and New Testament, and make up the chief Part of Revelation. They think it is ridiculous to assert, that the Scripture is the only Rule of Faith, and at the same time, take the Liberty to explain away those Ideas, which the Language of it naturally conveys; and to insist upon it, that the Terms and Expressions of the Bible, are not to be understood in their proper and natural Import. For this Practice, say they, can't possibly be vindicated, upon any other Principle than this, *viz*. that we have an Acquaintance with the Nature of those Subjects, about which the Scripture treats, independently of that Revelation, from Reason and the Light of Nature. And if

it is allowed, that Reason can furnish us with the Knowledge of most of the Doctrines of Revelation, that Revelation was not necessary to the Happiness of Mankind, and, consequently, to say the least, no great Danger can attend the Rejection of it; but upon a Persuasion of the Absurdity of its Doctrines they can't but reject it. And therefore, *Gentlemen,* who are of either of your Opinions, ***S., A.*** *and* ***B.*** are not proper to undertake the Defense of the holy Scripture against them; at least not perfectly so; for they are astonished, that any can think, that the Principles of ***C.*** are not asserted therein, and, consequently, the only way of convincing them of the Truth of Revelation, is to vindicate those Principles from a Charge of Absurdity, which they are taught by you to load them with. In short, they *laugh* at those Defenders of the Christian Religion, who deny the Sentiments of ***C.*** and maintain, that they are not delivered in the sacred Writings; because they observe, that those *Gentlemen* are obliged to put forced Interpretations on the Language of a Book which they profess to make the Rule of their Faith, and that they do this in almost all the Subjects whereof it treats. This, say they, is not to take the Scripture for a Rule of Faith, but Reason independent of Revelation, which they pretend to defend.

C. said to ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** *Gentlemen,* I hope you will consider of what ***D.*** has now expressed. I have long thought, that this is the Fact, that many of the Deists, are fully persuaded, that my Sentiments are contained in the Bible, and that because they think them absurd, for that very Reason, they dare to

reject it. Whereupon they said to ***C.*** Sir, *we are not able to discover the Propriety of your Advice, for it is a Principle with you, that Men without divine Illumination, are not able to understand the Scripture, or the Doctrines of Revelation, and that God does not afford this irradiating Influence to many, if, therefore, it is not his sovereign Pleasure to enlighten our dark Minds, by the Rays of his divine Light, how is it possible for us, to discern his Truths?* ***C.*** You seem determined in all Things to misrepresent my Sentiments. I am confident, that Men, by the Exercise of their reasoning Powers upon the Word of God, may discover that the Doctrines for which I contend are true, or that they are really contained in the holy Scripture; tho' they cannot discern their Excellency, Glory and Importance, without that spiritual Illumination which you mention. And there are very different Things. I do not think, nay, I know the contrary, that the Language of Revelation, is *obscure* and *unintelligible*; it is *plain* and *easy* to be understood of all; and, therefore, none ought to complain of a Want of necessary Means of knowing what we are required to believe. The Language of the Scripture, is to clear and so strong, in Favor of my Sentiments, that you find yourselves obliged very often, to depart from the natural Signification of its Terms and Phrase, to evade the Force of the Evidence they afford of the Truth of my Principles, which as ***D.*** has observed, is in Fact to reject it as a Rule of Faith, in all such Instances, and to attend to Reason in Matters, which are quite out of its Compass. And this is not to act the Part of Christians. Let me therefore,

prevail with you to be guilty of it no more, from this Time. ***C.*** now addressed himself to the *Gentleman,* whom I have all along called a *Deist,* but I must now call him a Christian, and bespoke him thus. Sir, It gives me a Pleasure not to be expressed, that our Debate has had this happy Issue, to convince you of your Prejudices against evangelical Truths, or of the divine Original of the Christian Religion; I pray God, that you may experience the benign Influences of his Grace, to assist you in the Practice of all those Duties, which justly demand your constant Attention; that you may enjoy solid and lasting Peace in your own Mind, and that you may adorn the precious Truths, you declare that you have received a clear and full Conviction of. Consider this, that Persons of the Sentiments of ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** are very much disposed to traduce such, who embrace the Principles, you and I now unite in maintaining; pray, therefore, that the Grace of God may teach you *to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present World*. That so, it may never be said, that upon your embracing these Principles, you became vain in your Conversation. Be careful, that Truth, divine Truth, don't suffer by your taking upon you the Profession of it. Then he observed that ***S.,*** *A*. and ***B.*** pretended to give the Honor of our Salvation to the gratuitous Favor of God; but that in Reality they founded it upon, and resolved it into, the Will of Man. That ***S.*** denied the whole of the Satisfaction of Christ. That *A*. denied the Reality of his Satisfaction, tho' he spoke of his dying for us, becoming a Sacrifice, and obtaining

Redemption, and making Peace and Reconciliation by. his Death. — That ***B.*** also denied the Reality of his Satisfaction; not allowing that he paid our Debt, or that he suffered the Punishment which our Sins demerited, only granting, that the Death of Christ was accepted of God as a Ransom for us to this End, that he might pardon and save us on what Conditions soever he sees proper to require of us; that therefore, in our Remission, God does not appear to be just or righteous, upon the Foundation of the Death of his Son. — That ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** agree in maintaining, that our own Works justify us in the Sight of God our supreme Judge. — That ***B.*** founds our Acceptance at the last Day, not upon the Obedience of Christ, our only Saviour; but upon our own Faith and Obedience, tho' he talks of the Imputation of the. Obedience of Christ, as to its Effects, which is altogether impossible. — That tho' ***S., A.*** and ***B.*** allow of divine Aids and Assistances, yet they deny the Infusion of gracious Principles; and, consequently, are obliged to assert, that there is no Necessity of Regeneration, or of the Grace of Faith in order to do what is Good and pleasing to God, directly contrary to the express Doctrine of the Holy Scripture. — That tho' ***B.*** maintains the certain Salvation of the Elect, it is in such a Way, as at once deprives the divine Perfections of their Glory in their Salvation, and the Saints of all their present solid Peace and Joy; because upon his Principles, no Believer in the World, can possibly know, that *his Name is written in Heaven,* or that *he* is the Object of electing Love; and, therefore, cannot be assured of his Perseverance,

without an Assurance of which, none can be assured of their future Happiness. Thus it appears, that *Baxterianism* leads to *Arminianism,* and that to *Socinianism,* or to a Denial of almost all the peculiar Doctrines of divine Revelation; no Wonder, therefore, that *Socinianism* ends in *Deism*. The Reason why Infidelity spreads so much at this Time, is, Men throw off a Regard to the Doctrine, of the Scripture; and when they have done that, without much Difficulty, or Apprehension of Danger, they reject Revelation itself. ***B.*** was highly offended at this Discourse of ***C.*** and very ill resented, that he represented him as bordering upon *Socinianism,* in any evangelical Doctrine. But *C*. fully proved it by comparing the Sentiments of ***B.,*** with what the *Socinians* say relating to the great Doctrine of Justification. Upon which he was put to Silence, not being able to offer any Thing in his own Vindication. Thus the Conversation ended. After each *Gentleman* had paid his Compliments to their common Friend, who entertained them in a generous Manner, during the Debate, which was carried on several Days, they took Leave of one another, and returned to the respective Places of their Residence. My being present all the Time this Debate lasted, was no small Satisfaction to me, because I had an Opportunity of hearing what might be objected to *Calvinism,* by Persons who had long studied those Points, and were very expert in managing the Controversy, and of hearing the *Calvinist,* answer fully all that they were able to object to his Principles. This Account of the Debate, is so far as I am able to remember, *true, just,* and *impartial*. The Reader I leave to

determine for himself, on which Side the Truth is; tho' I, for my own Part, cannot but think, that ***C.*** was on the Side of Truth, and that ***S.,*** ***A.*** and ***B.*** were against it. The Reader will doubtless observe, that ***S.***, *A.* and ***B.*** sometimes used provoking Language to ***C.*** but that he did not return it to them.