

THE
PROPER ETERNITY
OF THE
DIVINE DECREES,
AND OF THE
MEDIATORIAL OFFICE,
OF
JESUS CHRIST:

ASSERTED and PROVED,

In a Discourse delivered, in a Monthly-Exercise
of Prayer with a Sermon, on the 19th of
September, 1754.

By JOHN BRINE.

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L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

*I*N composing this Discourse, I had no Thoughts of its Appearance in the World. But as the Publication of it, was desired, by such unto whom I pay no small Deference, I have ventured to expose it to public View, although, I am apprehensive, that it may be displeasing unto some; because I have herein, taken the Liberty to animadvert upon an Absurdity advanced, by a learned Author, concerning the divine Decrees: viz. That they are not properly Eternal; but later than the Existence of God, and had Beginning. We all profess to believe that we are fallible, and may err, and yet, it is very common with Men, to treat those with Disdain, who think that they are wrong in any Point, and attempt to rectify their Mistakes. Their Friends also, sometimes, very much ill-resent such Freedom. And, this is one of the numerous Ways wherein the Pride and Naughtiness of the Heart discovers itself. However, I am not unprepared for bearing Censure, in the Defence of that, which
appears

appears to me, is Divine Truth. I am only sorry that it hath not a better Advocate, when I am engaged in its Vindication. If what is presented to the Reader, shall be of the least Service, either in guarding him against, or convincing him of the mistaken Conceptions about the Decrees of God, the Person of Christ, and of his Constitution unto the mediatorial Office, so far my Ends will be answered. And, I am not altogether without Hope, that this short Discourse, may in some Measure, be conducive unto those Ends, under the divine Blessing : Unto which I would solemnly recommend it.

PROV.

 PROV. viii. 22, 23.

*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his Way,
before his Works of old. I was set up, from
Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the
Earth was.*

TH E S E are the Words of Wisdom,
which speaks throughout the Chap-
ter: Different Apprehensions have
been entertained concerning this di-
vine Speaker, viz. What, or who is meant
by Wisdom. I think there are clear Reasons
to conclude, that by Wisdom, a Person, or
intelligent Agent is intended: For, Wisdom
all along speaks under personal Characters,
and various personal Acts are attributed unto
this Speaker. As searching, or finding out.
*I Wisdom dwell with Prudence, and find out
Knowledge of witty Inventions. Also Acts of
Love and Affection: I love them that love me.
And acts of Joy and Delight: Then was I
by him, as one brought up with him, I was daily
his Delight, rejoycing always before him: Re-
joycing in the habitable Parts of his Earth, and
my Delights were with the Sons of Men.* All
which are personal Acts, and, therefore, this
divine Speaker, is a Person, or an understanding
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Agent; and the Things which are predicated of this Speaker, are so *grand* and *sublime*, that they cannot be applicable to any other Person than Christ, who is the *Wisdom*, as well as the *Power of God*.

Understanding the Words of our blessed Redeemer, without commenting upon what precedes, I shall immediately proceed to the Explication of them.

And it will be proper to shew, what is designed by the Way of the Lord; what the Beginning of his way imports; what is implied in the Act of possessing Christ; what Works of God are intended, before which he possessed our Saviour, and why they are said to be of old; what the setting up of Wisdom designs: when this was done, *from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was*.

I. I would shew what is designed by the Way of the Lord. The Way of God sometimes intends his wise and holy Dispensations towards the World, and towards his Church in Providence, which are the Accomplishment of his Decrees concerning both, with respect unto their temporal Estate. This is a Sense wherein it is frequently to be understood: And his Way is to be taken for his gracious Purposes and Counsels, which were formed in his infinite and eternal Mind, concerning Christ, and his Church. I apprehend this Sense is designed by it in these Words: *For my Thoughts are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways saith the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the*

the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts.*

It is of pardoning Grace and Mercy, that the Lord there speaks: *For he will abundantly pardon.* We are too apt to limit the *Holy One of Israel*, in his Acts of pardoning Kindness and Mercy. And it is his Intention, in these Words to assure us, that his Purposes of Grace, Mercy, and Pardon, infinitely exceeds those Conceptions which we are apt to entertain ther of. I apprehend, that in this Sense, the divine Way is to be understood, in the Text: Or, that God's Thoughts and Purposes of Love, and Grace concerning Christ and his Members are meant by his Way. Further I am to shew,

II. What the Beginning of his Way imports. If we understand it of Duration: That must either commence, or not commence, have Limit, or not have Limit. The Term beginning is put for Duration, which had not Commencement, in these Words; *God hath from the Beginning chosen you to Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and the Belief of the Truth.* This divine Act of Election was eternal: *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the Foundation of the World.* From the Beginning, and before the Foundation of the World mean the same. And, there never was an Instant, wherein the Church was not the Object of a gracious Choice unto Salvation, or the Enjoyment of eternal Life.

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* Isa. lv. 8, 9,

A learned Writer hath been pleased to distinguish upon Eternity, *a Parte ante*, or that Duration, which was before the Existence of the World, or Things created, and speaks of a *first*, and an *after Date* therein. The *first Date* respects, he says, *God's Existence*, which was eternal, and had no Beginning: The *after Date* refers unto his Decrees, or Acts within himself relating unto Christ and the Church, which he affirms had *Beginning*: He sums up what he had before more largely expressed, and pleaded for, in this Assertion, *viz. God himself was before the Conceptions and Thoughts which he entertained of his Works: Before, besure in Order of Nature; but how long before, the Thing neither speaks nor the Word declares**. Let us press this Grape a little, that we may be able to form a Judgment of the Nature of its Juice. The plain Import of this Assertion is, God was before he had infinite Thought and Consciousness; but how long before, is impossible to be known, because neither the Thing speaks, nor the Word declares it. This is a *very unsafe, a very offensive, and a most absurd Way of speaking*. If God ever was without infinite Thought and Consciousness, he was not, he then could not be God. For, a Being without Thought and Consciousness can't be God. To be quite free with you upon this Subject. The Assertion is so *extremely absurd, that it excites my Astonishment*. The Divine Decrees are of the same Date with the Existence of God. His Being is not of one Date, and his Purposes of another, a later Date.

* Mr. Hussy, *The Glory of Christ unveil'd*, p. 85, 86.

Date. Besides, to suppose, that there was an *everlasting*, or a Duration, before the Existence of a Creature, that really had a Beginning, or Commencement, is to imagine, that there was a Duration, which was neither *eternal*, nor *temporary*; but *something between both*, which is an highly *absurd* Imagination. Duration is, either immeasurable and without any Limit: Or, it is measurable and hath a Limit. If Duration past is immeasurable, it is eternal, and could not have any Beginning. If it is measurable, it is not eternal, but temporary, and must have had Commencement. *There can be no Medium between Eternity and Time.* A Duration which begins, is measurable and limited, whether it is measured and divided into the Parts whereof it consists, or not, by the Motion of Body, or otherwise. Measurable and limited it is, and there must be some *Instant* at which we must necessarily stop, when we contemplate a past Duration, which had Beginning. If, therefore, the Divine Decrees are *later* than the Existence of God, or had Beginning, they must, as to Duration, have been infinitely short of the Existence of God. So that, according to the Doctrine contained in this *most absurd* Assertion, there must have been an infinite Duration, wherein, God was without any Conceptions and Thoughts of his Works: That is to say, without infinite Thought and Consciousness; and, therefore, for an infinite Duration, he was not God. For, if his Conceptions and Thoughts really had

had Beginning, they must begin after himself had existed, in a Duration infinite : Because such a Duration must have been before a measurable Duration could begin, and, consequently, though God, in his Existence is eternal, his Love to Christ, and the Church, and his Decrees about them, are not eternal ; but only temporary. Which is no more true, than it is, that the Almighty Creator, once, was not God.

A certain Writer pours Contempt upon some, whose Works have praised, and will long praise them, in the Gates of the Church, that have endeavoured, to prove Christ's eternal Existence, or proper Deity from this Place. His contemptuous Words concerning them, are these : *I wonder not, that Arianism prevails as it doth, amongst us, at this Day, when such poor, blind, ignorant Wretches, undertake to defend the Doctrine of the Redeemer's Godhead; for sure I am, that going to the viiith of the Proverbs to prove it, is for ever to give up the Cause into the Hands of the Arians.** This contemptuous Language the Author prevailed with himself to use, concerning some worthy Persons, as any perhaps, the Church of God was blessed with in the former Century.

His great Confidence and Contempt will not deter me from asserting, that in this *Chapter*, clear Proof is given, in Abundance, and above all Exception, unto the important Doctrine of the eternal Existence, and proper Deity of our precious

* Mr. Stockell. The Redeemer's Glory unveiled, p. 36.

precious Redeemer. I shall proceed so far, as to say, that, if that Doctrine is not capable of Proof, from this Context ; Proof of it cannot be brought from any Part whatever, of sacred Writ. The Terms and Phrases, used therein, expressing the Eternity of his Existence, are so full, strong, and *explicite*, that none more so can be produced. But this Writer was led into a Mistake, by what the *learned* Author, I before referred unto, had advanced, concerning the Import of the Term everlasting, as it is used, in relation to God's Decrees, and Acts within himself, as some other Persons have also been, which is not a little to be lamented.

Upon the Whole, if Beginning is understood of Duration, Eternity must be intended : Or that immeasurable Duration, which was before the Creation of the World, and had no Commencement. But, it may be observed, that in the Original, it is not, in the Beginning, as we translate ; but *the Lord possessed me, the Beginning of his Way :** And the *original* Word signifies the First, or Chief. By which two Things are suggested,

1. That Christ is the First and Chief, in the Decrees of God, as they are all calculated for his Glory, above Angels and Men. The supreme End of God in his Purposes and Operations, is the Glory of his own infinite Perfections, Wisdom, Power, Goodness, &c. For he made, and decreed to make all Things
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* ראשית Without the Prefix ב.

for himself. His next, subordinate End, which he eternally had in View, was the Glory of Christ, in the Character of Mediator, as an Effect of his infinite Love unto his Person. Hence the Apostle speaking of Christ in his mediatorial Capacity, or of his Person, as constituted of the divine and human Natures, says : *All Things were created by him and for him.* They were made by him, as an efficient Cause, and they were also made for him, as a final Cause.

Again, 2. When it is said, that Christ is the First, or Chief of God's Ways, it implies, that there is a more glorious Display of his Perfections in him, than in any of, or all his other Works taken together. All Divine Works are excellent and worthy of their infinitely good and great Author. The Works of Creation point out unto us the infinite Wisdom, unlimited Power, and Benevolence of the Creator. *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.* But, there is a far more illustrious and superior Display of the Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness, Truth, and Justice of God, in the Constitution of the Person of Christ, and in the *amazing* Designs, which are thereby accomplished. And, therefore, with great Propriety, he may be said, as Mediator, to be the Chief of his Ways. I proceed to shew,

III. What is implied in the Act of possessing Christ. The *original* Word * signifies to have or possess by Price, or by Labour, and sometimes by Birth. In this Sense *Eve* uses it. When she had conceived and bore *Cain*, she said : *I have gotten* (the same Word) *a Man from the Lord*. In this Sense it may be understood here, for there is not that wanting in the Context, which gives Countenance unto it. Wisdom, or Christ, says of himself, *Before the Mountains were settled, before the Hills was I brought forth*. The latter Writer, unto whom I before referred, on the Subject of the Filiation of Christ, hath these remarkable Words : *I am positive, that Christ as the eternal God* (i. e. as a Divine Person) *was never begotten, since it is impossible for me to conceive the begetter and the begotten to be of equal Date.*†

Why is he so confident that Christ, as a Divine Person, was never begotten ? He was so, because he was not able to conceive how he could be of the same Date with him, by whom he was begotten. Shall we *poor Worms*, whose Understandings are finite and limited, take upon us, boldly to pronounce, that, that cannot be in Deity, which we are unable to form adequate Ideas of, or explain how it is ? We must forget our own Nature, and the Nature of God also, if we do. We must forget our own Nature, that it is limited and finite, and for

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† Mr. Stockell, *ibid.* p. 41.

that Reason, incapable of comprehending that which is infinite. And, we must forget the Nature of God, *viz.* that it is infinite, and therefore, unto us incomprehensible. That, therefore, may be in Deity, which we are sure cannot be in finite and limited Beings. And, that which involves a Contradiction, in Beings finite and limited, may not, in that Being, which is infinite. For Instance, in the human Nature, it implies a manifest Contradiction to conceive, that he who is begotten, is of the same Date with him that begot him. But, it by no Means follows, that it is a Contradiction to conceive, that a Divine Person, who is begotten, is of the same Date with the Divine Begetter. This Writer, notwithstanding his Confidence in this Matter, might have been asked, as puzzling Questions concerning Eternity, as any he could propose relating unto this *mysterious* Subject. But, I suppose, he would scarcely have denied, that there is a Duration, which had not Beginning, and which will never end, though he might have found it impossible for him to resolve some difficult Questions concerning it.

It is beyond Contradiction, that Christ is the Son of God. He is his Son, therefore, either in a *proper* Sense, or only in an *improper* and *metaphorical* one. That he is the Son of God, in a proper Sense, may be concluded from his asserting, that God was his own Father : *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work* : The *Jews* inferred, and very rightly, from this Assertion,

Affertion, and not from his affirming himself to be the *Messiah*, that he *made himself equal with God*. Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, not only because he had broken the Sabbath, but said also, that God was his (*idior own, or proper*) Father, making himself equal with God.* He is so a Son, as to be of the same Nature with God, whose Son he is. For which Reason, he is called God's own, or *proper* Son. God spared not his own, or *proper* Son. God can't be his *proper* Father, if he begat him not; nor can he be God's *proper* Son, unless he was begotten of him. But he is God's *begotten*, and his *only begotten Son*: God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son.

Some have thought, and some do think, that Christ is called the Son of God, because he is invested with Office. But, that is to confound the very different Characters, of a Son and a Servant, and it necessarily makes them the same. As invested with the Office of Mediator, he is God's Servant: *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold*. Now if it is true, that he is God's Son, as invested with the mediatorial Office, he is no otherwise a Son, than as he is a Servant, and these very different Characters, of Son and Servant, can contain and convey no different, but in all Respects, the same Idea, which there is no Reason to think. Besides, Christ was a Son antecedent unto his Investiture with the mediatorial Office,

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which

* John v. 17, 18.

which he could not possibly be, if his being in that Office was the *formal Reason*, or Cause of his Sonship. That he was a Son before his Investiture with Office, is, I think, abundantly clear from these Words of the inspired Writer : *For the Law maketh Men High Priests which have Infirmary ; but the Word of the Oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.* If Christ bears the Character of Son, on account of his being the High Priest, or Mediator of the Church, he could not be a Son, before his Investiture with that Office ; but it is most clear that he was : *For the Word of the Oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son, or constituteth the Son.* What doth it make or constitute him ? It made or constituted him High Priest, or Mediator : And, therefore, he was a Son before he was made High Priest, or Mediator. This is so *clear and illustrious* a Testimony unto the Truth of the Sonship of Christ, as a Divine Person, that I am persuaded, it will be impossible for the Wit of Man, by any *Arts*, or *Shifts*, to cloud it, and enervate its Force. Farther, Christ as a Son, was not under Obligation to obey and suffer. This is clearly suggested in these Words : *Though he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the Things that he suffered.* The Opinion of his being a Son, as invested with Office, must compel us to conclude this to be the Sense of those Words : Though he was a Son, and as such under Obligation to obey and suffer, yet
learned

learned he Obedience, by the Things that he suffered. But who can think this to be the Import of the Divine Writer? Surely none. As Mediator, he was under Obligation to obey and suffer: As a Son, he was not, and therefore, his mediatorial Office is not intended by his Sonship; but his filial Relation unto God, as a Divine Person.

Again, the Father possessed him of all those Treasures of Grace and Glory, which he intended the Church should receive here, and enjoy hereafter. And, there is that in the Context, which favours this Sense also: *That I may cause them that love me to inherit Substance, and I will fill their Treasures.* Christ is capable of making good this Promise: For, *it hath pleased the Father that in him all Fulness should dwell. He blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ.* And that Grace, according unto which we are saved and called, was given us in Christ: *Who hath saved us and called us, with an holy Calling, not according to our Works; but according to his own Purpose and Grace which was given us in Christ before the World began.* All those precious Benefits, which the Church of God partakes of, in this World, and all that Bliss and Glory, which she will possess in the heavenly State, were deposited, and laid up for her in the Hands of her ever-blessed and glorious Head. In whose Keeping they are eternally secure. Farther,

IV. God possessed Christ *before his Works of vld.*

1. The Works which are intended, are the Works of Creation ; of this I think there can be no Doubt : Because Wisdom, immediately after the Text, proceeds to give an elegant Description of the Creation : *When there were no Depths, I was brought forth : When there were no Fountains abounding with Water : Before the Mountains were settled, before the Hills was I brought forth : While as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the Fields, nor the highest Part of the Dust of the World. When he prepared the Heavens, I was there : When he set a Compass upon the Face of the Depth. When he established the Clouds above : When he strengthened the Fountains of the Deep : When he gave to the Sea his Decree, that the Waters should not pass his Commandment : When he appointed the Foundations of the Earth.* These are the wonderful Works designed, wherein Divine Wisdom and Power are manifested. Creation is proper to God. Omnipotence only could give Existence unto Body, out of non-existing Matter : Which it did. For, *Things which are seen, were not made of Things which do appear.* And infinite Wisdom and Power alone could form the beautiful Fabrick of the Universe, out of that *rude Mass of Matter, unto which Existence was first given : The Earth was without Form, and void : And Darknefs was upon the Face of the Deep.* Creation therefore, is a Work Divine, and peculiar to God. And he challenges it,

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as his own. *Lift up your Eyes on high, and behold who hath created these Things, that bringeth out their Host by Number; he calleth them all by their Names, by the Greatness of his Might, for that he is strong in Power, not one faileth*.*

2. These Works were wrought of old. Many Ages had then run out since the Creation of the World, and, therefore, they are said to be of old. And as Things created invariably keep those Laws, thro' all the successive Ages of Time, unto which they were subjected, in their Creation, it is an Evidence, that they were formed by infinite Wisdom, and are preserved and upheld in that beautiful Order, wherein they were at first fixed by immense Power. And,

3. Christ was possessed of the Father before a creating Act was put forth: Or before Being was given to any Creature, and, consequently, in Eternity: Or in that infinite, immeasurable Duration, which was before Time commenced. The Beginning of God's Way, therefore, cannot possibly mean a finite and limited Duration. If proper Eternity is not expressed by these Phrases, it will be impossible to produce any from Scripture, which expresses it. But the next general thing in the Text demands my Attention.

V. Christ was set up: *I was set up.* The original Word, (נָסַךְ) signifies *pouring forth*, or *anointing*, and as Oil was poured forth upon a Person

* Isa. xl. 26

Person who was invested with Office: Or, as a Person was anointed with Oil, when appointed unto Office, Christ's Appointment unto and Investiture with the mediatorial Office, is intended by this Phrase. The latter Writer, some of whose Words I took notice of before, entertaining the Notion of the Pre-existence of the Soul of Christ, labours to prove it from this Place. He objects unto the Application of the Phrase to Christ, as a divine Person, in this very *nonsensical* Manner. *Now this cannot have the least Relation to his Godhead, because we cannot say that was poured out* *. No, nor can we say, that his Soul was poured out, when he was anointed unto Office. The Person anointed to Office is not poured out, but Oil is poured forth upon him, or he is anointed therewith. He adds: *These Words may likewise denote his Unction; and so it may be read, I was anointed from Everlasting. In this Sense it cannot be applied to his Divinity* †. The Phrase being understood in its true Sense, it will quickly appear, that it may be very well applied to the Person of Christ, as designed unto a Union with the human Nature. For, it intends Designation to Office. And the divine Person of Christ, as he was to become incarnate, was invested with the mediatorial Office: Which was done in the everlasting Covenant, that was entered into by the Divine Persons.

Of that Covenant, and the Parties therein contracting, he speaks thus: *I am not writing about*

* Redeemer's Glory, &c. p. 40. † *Ibid.*

about the Counsels and Purposes of God in himself, but of his covenanting and contracting with a Person to fulfil and execute these Counsels and Purposes, and of the Person's Willingness, that was covenanted and contracted with to undertake such a Work.—I freely confess, that the Platform of Salvation was laid in the eternal Mind; and that the whole Scheme of our Happiness was drawn in Eternity, infinitely beyond all Date; but yet the Contract between the Father and Christ was not so, unless the Man Christ be infinitely Eternal, (it is absurd to think that Eternity is finite) or else an infinite Being must contract with himself. This is the Sum of what this goodly Author, had to object to the Eternity of the Covenant of Grace, and unto its being an Agreement between the divine Persons. The Whole of this Discourse will be removed out of the Way without the least Difficulty.*

For, tho' the divine Being did not contract with itself, the divine Persons, existing distinctly in the divine Essence, entered into Covenant with each other.

As the eternal *Three*, Father, Son, and Spirit, are personally distinct, tho' *essentially* one, they *each* act *distinctly*, in the divine Essence: Or the divine Wisdom and Will, which are essentially the same, act *distinctly* in each divine Person, by reason of their *distinct* personal Subsistence in the divine Nature.

Thus the divine Wisdom and Will, acting *distinctly* in the *distinct* Person of the Father,
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designed

* Redeemer's Glory, &c. p. 34.

designed and resolved upon the Incarnation of the Son, and his accomplishing our Redemption, in our Nature, as personally united unto himself, by doing and suffering all that Law and Justice required, unto that important End. And this was the Father's Proposal unto the Son, to undertake that great and arduous Work. And thus also,

The divine Wisdom and Will, acting *distinctly* in the Person of the Son, who subsists *distinctly* from the Father in the divine Essence, approved of this Design, or concurred with the Father therein; which Approbation and Concurrence, was the Son's Engagement to fulfil the Will and Counsel of the Father, relating unto that wonderful Affair, and it brought him under an Obligation, to do and suffer in our Nature, when taken into personal Union with himself, the Whole of what Law and Justice required, in order to our Salvation.

Again, the divine Wisdom and Will acting *distinctly* in the ever-blessed Spirit, who is a Person *distinct* from the Father and the Son, he approved of the gracious Design, of the Salvation of the Elect: And, as the divine Wisdom and Will, in the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son, willed that he should glorify Christ, and sanctify the Church; he agreed, and consented unto the Will of the Father, and the Will of the Son. Thus he took upon himself the Work and Office of glorifying Christ, and sanctifying the Church, which is that Part that he bears in the Oeconomy of our Salvation.

Salvation. And, therefore, as the Son became obliged unto the Father, as he was to be incarnate, to redeem his People and Members: So the holy Spirit became obliged unto both the Father and the Son to glorify Christ and sanctify the Church.

And, I humbly apprehend, that it is with *especial* Relation unto this, that the Holy Spirit is so frequently stiled the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of his Son, or of Christ; That for this Reason also, he is said to be sent both by the Father and the Son. By his Engagement he came under Obligation, both unto the Father and the Son, to perform his Part, in the Business of our Salvation. And, this is the Foundation of his Mission by the Father, and of his Mission by the Son. Right arises from hence, unto both to send him: And, accordingly, he is sent by both. He comes at the Pleasure of the Father: *Whom the Father will send in my Name. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts.* He likewise comes at the Will of the Son: *If I depart I will send him unto you,* says Christ, concerning the holy Spirit, under the Character of Comforter.

These *distinct* and *mutual* Actings of the divine Persons, between themselves, are the Covenant of Grace, wherein the Method of our Salvation was fixed, and that gracious Design effectually secured.

And, therefore, this Author hath only discovered his *Weakness*, in saying, that the *Contract between the Father and Christ was not infi-*

*nately beyond all Date, unless the Man Christ be infinitely Eternal, (as he nonsensically speaks, for there is no finite Eternity) or else an infinite Being must contract with himself**. The infinite, distinct Persons, in Deity, contracted, or entered into mutual Engagements between themselves, in this federal Transaction. This was not the Contract of the divine Nature with itself; but it was the Contract of the divine Father, the eternal Son, and the blessed Spirit, who are *personally distinct*, tho' *essentially one*. Nor, can the *distinct* Actings of the divine Wisdom and Will, which are *essentially* the same, be denied, without the Denial of the *distinct* Personality of the Father, Son and Spirit. If they are *distinct* Persons, without all question they act *distinctly*: Or the divine Wisdom and Will act *distinctly*, in each of the eternal *Three*, Father, Son, and the holy Spirit.

Besides, to imagine, with this Author, that the human Soul of Christ existed when the Covenant of Grace was entered into, and that it was a contracting Party, in that Covenant, absolutely destroys the Eternity of it, which he is obliged to grant. Hence it undeniably follows, that *once* there was no Covenant of Grace: *Once* Christ was not the Mediator and Head of the Church. It was in that Covenant, that he

* Upon this Occasion, I cannot forbear to say, it is to be wished, that some Persons could prevail with themselves to rest satisfied, without becoming Authors; especially on *sublime Subjects*, which they are not qualified to write about, and, therefore, they expose themselves, and do much Prejudice to Truth, by their Publications on such Subjects.

was constituted such : If therefore, that Covenant *once* was not, it must be allowed that *once* Christ was not the Mediator and Head of the Elect of God : And, consequently, *once, his Delights were not with the Sons of Men.* This is that *Blessed Divinity*, which this Writer recommends unto the Embrace of Christians : But it ought to be eternally abhorred, as that which saps the very Foundation of all their Faith and Hope.

Farther, the Notion of the Pre-existence of the Soul of Christ, or of its existing before the Creation of the World, is repugnant to Scripture. That Opinion is as certainly false, as it is true, that *in the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.* If there was before Creation a limited Duration, that Duration must have had Commencement, and was measurable, tho' not measured and divided into its Parts, by any regular Motion of Body, as I have before observed. And, that *Instant*, at which we must necessarily stop, in our Conceptions concerning it, *was the Beginning*, and not that *Instant*, wherein God's Act of Creation was put forth. And, therefore, if this Notion is true, what *Moses* affirms must be false, and God did not in the Beginning create the Heavens and the Earth, but after the Beginning ; and how long after, it seems, is not knowable, perhaps Millions of Ages. Into such Absurdities will some Men run, in order to support their *Mis-conceptions* of Things, or a *darling* Opinion, which they have happened to embrace.

Once

Once more, for I have not yet done with this *vain* Conceit. To suppose, as this Writer does, that the Soul of Christ was a contracting Party in the Covenant of Grace, and not his divine Person, is to detract from his Glory as a divine Person, and is advancing his human Soul unto such Dignity, as is by no Means its Due. May the good Lord eternally preserve me, from lessening the Glory of a precious Jesus, in his human Nature, which ought ever to be dear to my Soul! I humbly hope, that I shall never express any thing, detracting from his Honour, in his human Nature. My Heart can't possibly bear the *killing* Thought: And, yet, with *Intrepidity* I say, that it was a Glory *peculiar* to Christ, in his divine Person, to contract with the other divine Persons, the Father and the Holy Spirit, and that it was an Honour infinitely too great for the human Soul of Christ, to become a contracting Party in the Covenant of Grace. The Parties contracting were *equal*, as it was *condecant and fit*, that so they should be.

Indeed, the Will of Christ as Man, upon his subsisting, in his human Nature, freely and fully consented, unto all the Articles, agreed on in the Covenant, relating unto both his Obedience and Sufferings: But it was his Engagement, as a divine Person, which brought his human Nature under Obligation to obey and suffer, as it hath its Subsistence therein. And it was fit, that the infinitely superior constituent Part of Christ, in his complex Character, should undertake for his inferior constituent Part, as Mediator. So that it was not
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necessary, that his human Nature should subsist, in either part of it, his Soul no more than his Body, at his undertaking the Work of Redemption, in the Covenant of Grace.

In the setting up of Christ, or his Designation unto the mediatorial Office, various Particulars may be observed. As,

1. The divine Father purposed and proposed to him, that in *the Fulness of Time* he should assume our Nature, into Union with himself. The divine Wisdom and Will, acting distinctly in the Person of the Father, as is above explained, moved this to him. This was a *Foreordination* of him to become Man, *before the Foundation of the World*.

2. Christ consented unto this Design, and Proposal of the Father: Or the divine Wisdom and Will, acting *distinctly* in the Person of the Son, as is before expressed, he approved of this Design and Proposal of the Father, and the Concurrence of the divine Will, in his Person, was his Engagement, to take our Nature into a personal Union with himself, at the Time appointed. His Language in this Transaction was: *Lo I come*. Hence,

3. Tho' the human Nature of Christ did not then subsist, he was considered, as God-Man, by the divine Persons. Not that the divine Understanding, in either of the divine Persons, accounted him to have Subsistence then, as Man; for that he had not; and, therefore, it was not possible, that the divine Understanding could conceive him to be then existent, in

his human Nature ; but he was had in Repute, by the divine Persons, as God-Man, by reason of his certain future Incarnation, which was then resolved upon, between themselves. And in this Character, the Covenant of Grace was made with him. I would observe,

4. The Work assigned unto him, as incarnate ; or what was required of him, as his Person is constituted of the divine and human Natures, in order to the Salvation of his Body, the Church. And,

(1) It was required of him to come under the Command of the Covenant of Works. That Covenant, without a *special* Appointment, could have had no Concern with, or Power over him, either in its Precepts, or Threatnings, not only because he was not represented by *Adam*, with whom that Covenant was made, nor a natural Descendant of his : But also, because his human Nature, as united unto his divine Person, is raised above the State and Condition of a mere Creature : And, therefore, it was a gracious Act of Condescension, in his divine Person, to consent, that, that constituent Part of himself, as Mediator, should come under the Obligation of the Covenant of Works: *Being found in Fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, in becoming obedient unto Death.* Again,

(2) Another Thing required of him, was to suffer and die for his People, to make Atonement for their Sins: *When thou shalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin ; he shall see his Seed.* This Article his divine Person also agreed unto.
And

And the Consent of his divine Will brought his human Nature, under Obligation to submit to Death: *Ought not Christ to have suffered these Things?* It was an Act of infinite Compassion in Christ to poor Sinners, to consent, to give up his human Nature, to the most dolorous Sufferings, and unto the most Ignominious, and also an accursed Death, to redeem them from justly deserved Destruction.

(5) The human Nature of Christ being united unto his divine Person, these two Things follow upon it.

[1] As Man he was at the Disposal of his divine Will. As God, or a divine Person, he had absolute Power over his human Nature, which was a constituent Part of himself, as Mediator, and, therefore, he had full and proper Right, to covenant and agree, that his human Nature should both obey and die, in Obedience unto the Will of the Father. For, that Nature was his *own* in a *peculiar* Sense, and it was fit, that it should be absolutely at the Disposal of his divine Will. His Assumption of it into Union with himself was with a View, that it might so be. And our blessed Lord clearly expresses the Right of his divine Person to dispose of his human Nature, according unto his own absolute Pleasure, in these Words: *No man taketh my Life from me; I lay it down of myself; I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it again. This Commandment have I received of my Father.* The Glory of Christ as Man is unequalled, in Consequence, of his personal

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Union

Union with the eternal Son of God: But this Union is so far from raising his human Nature, above an absolute Subjection unto his divine Will, that it necessarily infers it: Or the absolute Subjection of his human Will, unto his divine Will, necessarily follows upon it. His Engagement, therefore, as a divine Person, in the everlasting Covenant, brought an Obligation upon him, as Man, to do and suffer all, that was included in that federal Engagement of his, tho' his human Nature was not then existent.

[2] When the blessed Jesus had Subsistence as Man, his human Will, which is absolutely distinct from his Will, as God, was wholly under the Direction and Influence of his divine Will. And it was fit, that it should so be, for it would have been the highest Incongruity, if the human Will of Christ had not been under the determining Influence of the Will of his divine Person. Hence it was impossible, that the Will of Christ, as Man, should in any Instance, or at any Time, clash with his divine Will. And it is hence also, that the holy moral Operations of the human Nature of Christ, are to be esteemed the Acts of his Person, as Mediator, and that they become infinitely *meritorious*: Because they are the Acts of his Person, who is God as well as Man, tho' the human Nature only, is the immediate Subject from which they spring; therefore, infinite Merit attends them.

5. The Father gave the Elect to Christ, *as his Jewels*, or his own *peculiar* People: *Thine they*

they were, and thou gavest them me. He was constituted a Head to them, and they became his Members. And he came under Obligation to preserve them safe, and to conduct them to that State of Dignity and Happiness, which the Father, as the Effect of his infinite Love, designed them, unto the Enjoyment of. For which reason our blessed Lord says: *This is the Father's Will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up, at the last Day.*

6. A glorious Reward was promised unto him, for the important Services, which he undertook to perform. All the Glory that he possesses, as Mediator, was then granted to him, on Condition of his Obedience, Sufferings and Death. And, therefore, he speaks of his having this Glory before the World was: *With the Glory which I had with thee before the World was.* He had it, in Promise and Grant, when he engaged to fulfil the Father's Pleasure, concerning the Redemption of his People,

Thus, I think it appears very clearly, that Christ the eternal Son of God, as he was to become Incarnate, entered into Covenant with the Father, and undertook to accomplish the Whole of his Will, relating to the Recovery of those unto whom he was appointed a Head, in such a Way, as magnifies the Law, and is becoming all the divine Perfections: And, that all that Glory, which he hath Possession of, was given to him by Promise, in the Character of Mediator, tho' neither constituent Part of

his human Nature, his Soul, or his Body, then subsisted.

VI. And lastly : The Constitution of Christ Mediator, was *from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was.*

These Phrases express either a measurable Duration, or an immeasurable one. It is I think allowed by all, that a Duration is intended, which was before the Existence of the World. That Duration either had Beginning, or it had not. If it commenced, and had Beginning, it was properly *Time*, and *not Eternity*. Time and Eternity differ, as *finite* and *infinite* differ. Time is finite, and Eternity is infinite. And it is impossible, that there should be a Medium between Eternity and Time : As there cannot be a Mean between infinite, and finite. Whatever is, must be either infinite or finite, unlimited, or limited. And, consequently, this Duration, if it began, it was Time, it could not be Eternity : It was measurable, and certainly had a Limit, at which we must necessarily stop, in our Conceptions about it ; if not, it was Eternity : Or a Duration infinite. To say, that it was not measured by the regular Motion of Body, as Time with us, is measured by the Course of the Sun, will not prove it immeasurable, nor can that be intended ; because then it must be granted, that it was Eternity, which it is not allowed to be, by those unto whom I have Reference ; but it is said to be an AFTER DATE of Eternity, by the *learned* Author before mentioned, which had Beginning,

ning, or Commencement, which if it had, it was *properly Time*, and it must differ from Eternity, as that which is finite differs, from that which is infinite. And what is to be proved by all this? No other Thing, than, that God's Decrees are *later* than his Existence, and how much later he could not determine, because *neither the Thing speaks, nor the Word declares it*. The Being of God was eternal, or had no Beginning; but all his Decrees, if this is true, were *temporary*, or had Beginning. And therefore, for an infinite Duration, which must have been, before this *After Date, or Beginning*, could take Place; God was without any Conceptions and Thoughts of his Works. That is to say, *once God had no Love to Christ as Mediator, nor Conceptions concerning him: Once he had no Love to the Church, nor Thoughts about her: Once he was without infinite Thought and Consciousness, and consequently he once was not God*. For, a Being without infinite Thought and Consciousness can't be God. As I have before said.

The other Writer mentioned above, in order to support his Notion of the Existence of the Soul of Christ before the Creation of the World, interprets these Phrases, in the same Manner; in this, copying after that *learned Author*, as some others also do, to defend a Notion which is *absolutely useless*, that hath not the least Connection with, Dependence upon, nor is inferrible from any Branch whatever, of evangelical Truth. But is wholly dissonant to the Scripture, and everts the eternal Covenant of
Grace,

Grace, wherein the Salvation of God's Elect was everlastingly provided for and secur'd.

If there was a Duration before the Production of the World, which had Commencement, why may there not be a Duration, after the Diffolution of it, which will have an End? And if the former is called everlasting, tho' it had Beginning, why may not the latter be so called, tho' it should have an End? As some imagine it will; but both are *foolish Dreams* and *alike untrue*.

Farther, if this Liberty may be taken in interpreting the Scripture, I am sure, it will be impossible to prove from thence, the Eternity of God himself; for his eternal Existence is not expressed in stronger Language, than is used about his Decrees, and the Designation of Christ unto the mediatorial Office, in respect to that Duration, wherein the divine Decrees were formed, and Christ was *set up*, or constituted Mediator. And such Liberty can be taken, only to maintain that which is directly absurd, and repugnant unto some of the most glorious Truths of the Gospel, *viz.* Christ's eternal Relation to the Church of God, and his eternal Engagements in her Favour, in the Covenant of Grace.

These Phrases, *from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was*, so fully express Eternity, or that immeasurable Duration which was before Creation, that I much scruple whether any, which do more strongly express it in Scripture, can be produced. *So operose was Solomon, in setting forth the Eternity of Wisdom, lest it should be thought that he spake of created Wisdom,*

Wisdom, as the learned *Gejerus* observes. When God represents unto us his eternal Existence, it is thus: *Yea, before the Day was, I am he*(*). And when he asserts the Eternity of his Decrees, it is thus: *Calling the Generations*, (מראש) *from or before the Beginning*(†). And the plain Sense of the Phrases here used, is, Duration before the Commencement of Time, or the Existence of any Thing created. Christ was set up *before the World or Time, before the Beginning, and before the Earth existed*(‡). I humbly hope that the *proper* Eternity of the divine Decrees, and the *proper* Eternity of the mediatorial Office of Christ, are established beyond sober and modest Objection; which were the important Ends that I had in View, in this Discourse. I shall close it with making three Observations.

First Observation. The Evangelical Scheme is *wholly new*: It is a System of Truths, which Reason in its highest Perfection, could not possibly have acquired any Knowledge of. There are three Principles, from which we derive all our Ideas, *viz.* Sensation, Reflection and Abstraction; by neither of which we could ever have obtained, the least Acquaintance with the *deep Things of God*. And this is, I humbly apprehend, the Meaning of the Apostle in these Words: *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*
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* Isa. xlii. 13.

† Chap. xli. 4.

‡ *Ante Seculum uncta fui, ante Principium, ante Primordia Terræ*: So *Noldius* renders the Words. Vid. Concord. Partic. in D.

The Eye hath seen much, and the Ear hath heard much: A very considerable Part of our Ideas, are gained by Sight and Hearing; which includes in it, the whole of the Instruction that we receive from others, relating to the Nature of Things. But it was not possible that by these Means we should ever have discovered any Evangelical Truths: Sensation could not enable us to make such important Discoveries; neither could Reflection on those Ideas gained by Sensation, help us in this Matter: Nor could Abstraction, which is a Separation of our Ideas; by which Act of the Mind a new Kind of Ideas are obtained, which are purely intellectual, assist us in this Thing. The Reason hereof is clear. The Truths of the Gospel have neither Connection with, nor Dependence upon, any Branch of Truth, which a finite Understanding is capable of discovering.

If we had a complete Knowledge of the *first* Covenant, in the whole Compass of its Principles, Precepts, Promises and Threatenings, we then should be absolutely unable to make the least Discovery of the Doctrine of the second Covenant; for that is entirely new, and altogether distinct in its Nature, from the first Covenant. And it being so, none of its Truths come within the Verge, even of unimpaired and perfect Reason; which fully proves the absolute Impossibility, of the human Mind gaining the Knowledge of its Truths, by any Acts it is able to put forth. Angels themselves could never have known any Thing at all of Evangelical Mysteries, without *supernatural* Revelation.

lation. Truths they are, which were *hid in God, who created all Things by Jesus Christ.*

To imagine, as some have imagined, that the second Covenant is founded on Truths contained in the first; or upon those natural Notions, which we have as Men, of the moral Perfections of God; is effectually to destroy both Covenants: For, that Imagination, is inconsistent with the Nature of the Covenant of Works, and with the Nature of the Covenant of Grace. The mediatorial Scheme, hath no Relation unto, nor Agreement, in its Nature with the Doctrine of the first Covenant; tho' it is calculated to secure the highest Honour to it, by the Obedience and Death of Christ.

Second Observation. Hence we learn what will be the noble Employ of the Saints in the heavenly State: *viz.* The Contemplation and Adoration of the Divine Perfections, as displayed in the astonishing Affair of their Recovery and Salvation. Some seem to please themselves with the Thoughts of this, that in Heaven they shall become perfect Philosophers, and have a more extensive Knowledge of Things created, than *Adam* had in Paradise: That they shall be able to unravel Nature in her secret Causes, numerous Operations, and multiplied various Effects. I can find nothing in Scripture, which favours this tickling Imagination: This I know, that the Souls of the Saints, will be eternally entertained, with what is infinitely more *noble, sublime and grand*, than any Thing which Nature can possibly suggest to

the Mind. I am clearly of the Opinion of an eminent Divine in this Matter, who speaks thus: *Is it not much to be lamented that many Christians content themselves with a very superficial Knowledge of these Things?* (i. e. Gospel Truths) *How are the Studies, the Abilities, the Time and Diligence of many excellent Persons, engaged in, and laid out about the Works of Nature, and the Effects of Divine Wisdom and Power in them, by whom any Endeavour to enquire into this glorious Mystery (of Christ's Person) is neglected, if not despised! Alas, the Light of Divine Wisdom, in the greatest Works of Nature, holds not the Proportion of the meanest Star unto the Sun in its full Strength; unto that Glory of it which shines in this Mystery of God manifest in the Flesh, and the Work accomplished thereby. A little Time shall put an End unto the Subject of their Enquiries, with all the Concernment of God and Man in them for evermore. This alone is that which fills up Eternity, and which altho' it be now with some as nothing, yet will shortly be All*.* The constant Contemplation on these glorious and sublime Mysteries, fills the Minds of the Blessed with the highest Complacency and Delight, and will maintain in them a holy Adoration of God unto Eternity.

Third Observation. If we approve of these Things, and they are delightful unto us, as the Glory of God shines forth in them; it is an Evidence in itself, whether we allow it or not in our own Favour, that we are the happy Subjects of a gracious Illumination from God. For,
such

* Dr. Owen of the Person of Christ, p. 290, 291.

such is the Nature of these Heavenly Mysteries, that the *carnal* Mind hath not, nor can have any Pleasure in them. That *receives* them not, they are *Foolishness* unto it, whatever is pretended to the contrary; it cannot *know* them, because they are *spiritually discerned*. And, therefore, if the Things themselves are agreeable to us, if they are our *chief Joy*, and that State is most desirable to us; wherein we shall perfectly know them, and be for ever conversant about them, we are certainly *meet* for the Enjoyment of it.

Our present Satisfaction and Complacency in these sublime Truths, as they are glorifying unto God in all his infinite Perfections, is a full Evidence of our future Happiness in the Contemplation of them, in the World of Light and Glory above. For, our Approbation of Heavenly Things is a clear Proof, That *God, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of his Glory, in the Face (or Person) of Jesus Christ.*

F I N I S.