

CHAPTER III.

THE PRINCIPAL TITLES AND CHARACTERS WHICH, IN THE WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS, FORM THE IDEA OF THE TRUE GOD, ARE APPLIED TO JESUS CHRIST.

THAT Jesus Christ assumed the name, GOD, in a proper sense, appears from his apostles having ascribed to him those perfections, which form the idea signified by that most venerable name: for, as before observed, there is no difference, in this respect, between what he says of himself, and what his disciples say of him; they speaking by his authority and his inspiration.

To the name, GOD, the prophets affixed the idea of an *almighty* Being, who created the heavens and the earth. The work of creation is frequently mentioned by them as the grand characteristic of the true God. Of this none can doubt. The formation of the universe is also expressly and repeatedly ascribed to Jesus Christ. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made," John i. 3. "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him, and for him," Col. i. 16. "He laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands," Psa. cii. 25. That these things are spoken of Christ is evident; nor can the words admit of a different sense, without manifest violence, as I shall show in a following part of this treatise. Here I shall only observe, that the apostles having so frequently attributed the creation of all things to Jesus Christ, and that work being so often mentioned by the ancient prophets as the effect of omnipotent agency, and the

most obvious character of the true God, especially when contending with idolaters, the writers of the New Testament must have acted a most unaccountable part, and, they being only the amanuenses of Christ himself, he must have been guilty of impious arrogance, if he be a mere creature.

The prophets represent God as an *omniscient* Being. Perfect knowledge is also ascribed to Jesus Christ. "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," said Peter to his Divine Master, John xxi. 17. Should it be objected, "It is nowhere said that Christ approved of the honour which is here done him by his apostle;" I answer, That is little to the purpose; for the expressions must be either false, or true. If *true*, Jesus must approve of them, for he is truth itself, and they prove the point for which we plead. If they be *false*, they are full of blasphemy; and, if so, the honour of God and the salvation of Peter made it absolutely necessary that he should have been sharply reprov'd for them. What! shall Christ say to that very apostle, "Get thee behind me, Satan," Matt. xvi. 23, when he only endeavoured to dissuade him from going up to Jerusalem, there to suffer! and shall he meet with no rebuke from the humble, holy Jesus, when he robs God of his glory, and gives it to another, by ascribing a Divine perfection to a mere man! Peter's fault, for which Jesus rebuked him, arose from his indiscreet zeal for the honour and safety of his Master. He did not perceive, while he was endeavouring to prevent the death of his Lord, that he was attempting to counteract the counsels of heaven, and to hinder an event, by which the glory of God is more highly exalted than by any other in the whole administration of Providence. There is

nothing so precious as the glory of God, it being the ultimate end of all things; consequently, so far as anything is contrary to it, it must be detestable. But in the passage before us, the apostle not only speaks *unadvisedly*, in regard to the glory of God, but, if his assertion be false, he is guilty of *blasphemy*. For he not only ascribes to Jesus the knowledge of *all things* in general, but also that of the *human heart* in particular. "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I LOVE THEE," John xxi. 17. This is a distinguishing character of JEHOVAH'S glory, and a perfection peculiar to the true God. For thus it is written, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I THE LORD search the heart, I try the reins," Jer. xvi. 9, 10. Here the God of Israel attributes to himself the knowledge of the heart as his own peculiar glory.

To place this momentous truth in a still stronger light, the words of Solomon, in his admirable prayer at the dedication of the temple, may be considered. "Thou, even THOU ONLY, knowest the hearts of all the children of men," 1 Kings viii. 39. Hence it is evident that the title, "Searcher of hearts," is included in that idea which the prophets give of the eternal God; and that it cannot belong to a mere creature, nor be given to him without blasphemy. Yet it is equally clear that Jesus takes the Divine title to himself, and that in the most solemn and remarkable manner. "All the churches shall know that I am HE which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works," Rev. ii. 23. It follows, therefore, that Jesus not only assumes the name, GOD, but also asserts his interest in those attributes which form, in the writings of the prophets, the most proper and sublime idea of

the Great Supreme. Consequently, if Jesus Christ be not the God of Israel, the Jews are obliged to reject his testimony as false, and his high pretensions as blasphemous.

It will be said, "Christ does not appropriate this title to himself in the *same sense* in which the God of Israel claims it, in the ancient prophets. When God is said to 'know the heart, and to try the reins,' the words are to be understood of such a knowledge as is peculiar to him; for He is not beholden to another for it. Whereas when Jesus Christ says, 'I search the reins and hearts,' the words are to be understood of a *derived* knowledge. For he does not know the secrets of the heart immediately and of himself, but because God reveals them to him." But when a person attributes to himself an eminent quality, or an exalted character, which is calculated to raise a suspicion in others, that he assumes an honour which does not belong to him, he is obliged to explain himself, by removing the ambiguity of the terms; otherwise, his temper may be justly accused of arrogance, and his conduct of robbery. So, if a subject should have a desire to be honoured with the title of *majesty*, under a pretence of his possessing some considerable office in the state; and if he were actually so honoured, he would be guilty of a capital crime, against the dignity of him whose glory he usurped. And though, in his own defence, he should say, That he did not desire, nor accept the title in the same sense, nor affix to it that exalted idea, which it bears when applied to his lawful sovereign, and which is commonly annexed to it by other men; and that he meant no more by it, than a subordinate and dependent majesty; he would soon be informed, that his excuses are mean, and his reason despicable. He

would quickly be told, that the word *majesty*, being, by general custom and the pleasure of ruling powers, appropriated to express the sovereign dignity of kings, by which they are not only distinguished from all their subjects, but also from other princes; he could not, without giving just and great offence, assume the title in any sense, much less without giving the least explanation of it. So the title, "Searcher of hearts," is, by Divine authority and common use, appropriated to express the peculiar and essential glory of God.

By common use: For no man, if we except our adversaries, ever ascribed it to any but God; and believers consider it as one of those Divine characteristics, by which he is distinguished from all other intelligences, and infinitely exalted above all creatures.

By Divine authority: For it is God, by the ministry of his prophets, who ascribes it to himself; who assumes it on different occasions, as belonging to himself only, and as being a peculiar character of his glory. None, therefore, besides God, can assume it without offence; much less could any mere creature take it on himself, without explaining in what sense he applies it. Yet Christ says, with an air of authority becoming none but JEHOVAH, and with the utmost solemnity, as of a matter of the last importance; "All the churches shall know THAT I AM HE WHICH SEARCHETH THEREINS AND HEARTS: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works," Rev. ii. 23. In which words the Redeemer connects the idea of *universal Judge* with the sublime character *Searcher of hearts*; as the prophet Jeremiah does, when he speaks of the MOST HIGH. And, indeed, if Jesus were not the *latter*, he would be very unfit for the office of the *former*; he being but poorly qualified "to give to every one

according to his works," who is not capable of "searching the heart."

Nor have we the least intimation in Scripture, that God's knowledge of the heart is *immediate*, but that of Christ *mediate*, or by revelation. For the apostle does not attribute this knowledge to Jesus Christ, because the secrets of the heart are *revealed* to him; but because he considers him as *knowing all things*. "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17. For a person to know the thoughts of the heart, because God reveals them to him, is to know them only as *man*; but to know them, because he knows all things, is to know them as *GOD*. Such is the knowledge which is here attributed to Jesus Christ. Further: if to know the secrets of the heart by revelation, were a sufficient reason of the title *Searcher of hearts*, the apostles themselves might have claimed the glory of it; for they, no doubt, as some of the ancient prophets, on particular occasions, had the thoughts of men's hearts revealed to them. This gift, it is probable, was greater in some than it was in others. Suppose, then, that one individual among them had it in the richest measure, and to the highest degree, so that he knew all secrets in general: on such a supposition, I demand, whether he might lawfully have assumed the character, *Searcher of hearts*? To assert that he might, is blasphemous; because it attributes that to another which is peculiar to God and Jesus Christ. If it be allowed that he might not, it follows, that whoever calls himself, *The Searcher of hearts*, means something more than knowing the heart *by revelation*.

It may, perhaps, be replied, "How great soever we suppose the knowledge of this man to be, yet the knowledge of Christ will be found more perfect;

which is a sufficient reason why he should not bear the title with him." But if the supposed person's knowledge be inferior to that of Christ; the knowledge of Christ must be still more inferior to that of God. If, then, it would be unlawful for such an one to assume the exalted title, out of respect for Christ; a regard for the honour of God ought much more to have prevented the man Jesus from ever assuming it: for the honour of God is of infinitely greater consequence than that of Christ, if he be a mere creature. Besides, the knowledge of Jesus, if he be not God, and the knowledge of this man, being both of the same kind, can differ only in *degree*. But the knowledge of God, and that of Jesus Christ, are *essentially* different. God's knowledge of the heart is immediate and of himself; but that of Christ is mediate and by revelation. So that if the man, supposed to know the heart, cannot say, "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts," without usurping the glory of Christ; neither can Jesus claim the power of searching the heart, or adopt the title, without usurping the glory of God.

Again: There is a difference, a very material difference, between *knowing* the secrets of the heart, and being the *Searcher* of the heart. He who searches the heart must be acquainted with its thoughts; but it does not necessarily follow, that he who knows its latent desires and intentions, is possessed of a capacity to search it. It may be said of a man, to whom the thoughts of another are revealed, "He knows his heart:" yet a prudent and pious man would avoid such general expressions, lest he should be suspected of profaneness, and would rather say, "He knows his heart by revelation." But he will never say, "He *tries* his reins, and *searches* his

heart," because that would be false and impious. For when any one is said to know the thoughts, to search the heart, and to try the reins, the phrases do not signify knowledge obtained from another *by revelation*; but to know, find out, and discover, by his own understanding, what lays concealed from others. Once more: When Christ says, "I am HE which searcheth the reins and hearts;" he either means, that we should keep to the natural signification of his words, or that we should depart from it. If the *latter*, he has laid a snare for us; he had a design to deceive us. For what else could be the reason of his talking with such solemnity, so as not to be understood? And how should he be understood, when he affixes an unnatural signification to his words? If the *former*, we cannot but conclude, that knowing the secrets of the heart by revelation, and searching the heart, are different things.

The prophets describe the true God as the *Saviour*, the *only Saviour* of sinners. For thus it is written, "I, even I, am JEHOVAH, and beside Me there is no saviour," Isa. xliii. 11. And again: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. There is an allusion, I acknowledge, in these passages, to the idols of the heathen, that were unable to save their deluded votaries; but yet this general truth is plainly and strongly implied, That God only can save the ends of the earth. The immediately preceding verse, in the latter of these texts, puts this beyond a doubt. For thus it is written, "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a SAVIOUR; there is NONE BESIDE ME." And yet Jesus Christ not only professes to save sinners, but he calls himself THE SAVIOUR, by way of emi-

nence, and in contradistinction to all others. Is it not manifest, then, that he assumes a character, in the most emphatical way, which the God of Israel had challenged and appropriated to himself? When the prophets reprov'd the folly and wickedness of them that put their trust in idols, by saying, There is *no Saviour* but the God of Jacob; they either intended to lay down a principle for the instruction of men in all succeeding ages, or only for the time then present. If the *latter*, the reason that God used in ancient times, by which to confound idolatry, is no longer of any force on such an occasion: nay, which is more extraordinary, an oracle becomes false, at the very time in which it is accomplished. For this divinely gracious declaration, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," refers to the calling of the Gentiles, and was not fulfilled till after the Messiah appeared: and yet it is since his appearance that we hear of a SAVIOUR and LORD, besides the God of Israel, who delivered that oracle. If the *former*, and if this declaration be a perpetual truth, "There is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me;" then I demand, whether he ought not to be accounted a blasphemer, who, though he be not the God of Israel, yet calls himself THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD?

"He calls himself," it will be said, "a *subordinate* Saviour." What, then, does Jehovah mean, when he says, "I am a just God and a Saviour, there is NONE BESIDES ME: I, even I, am the LORD, and beside Me there is NO SAVIOUR?" Does he not exclude *subordinate* gods and saviours? Supposing the ancient Israelites had considered Moses as a subordinate god and saviour, and worshipped him after

his death, because they were delivered by his ministry out of Egyptian bondage; would they not have acted contrary to the meaning of these declarations? It is absurd to imagine, that the prophets did not intend to exclude all subordinate gods and saviours; because the far greater part of pagan deities were considered by the dupes of idolatry under those characters. It is, at the same time, evident, that the penman of the ancient Scriptures teach us to acknowledge but *one* God, and *one* Saviour, even the God of Israel. Consequently, he who calls himself **THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD**, does not only assume the name, **GOD**; but also annexes to it one of the most gracious, endearing, and glorious ideas, that are included in it, in the ancient oracles, or that can be affixed to it by men and angels.

The prophets, to distinguish the true God from all other beings, call him "**THE FIRST AND THE LAST**," Isa. xlv. 6. This character they apply to **JEHOVAH**, as peculiar to him and incommunicable. Yet, in the Revelation of John, it is repeatedly assumed by Jesus Christ. It is agreed, on all hands, that this very sublime title was never given to any but the God of Israel, till after the incarnation: it was, therefore, become peculiar to Him by ancient and universal custom. Nor can it be questioned, if any creature had dared to apply it to himself, before the Messiah came, that he would have been charged with impiety and blasphemy. And were either man or angel at this day to assume it, the same accusation would be laid against him, and his conduct would be detested. Consequently, our adversaries themselves, were it not to serve an hypothesis, would not hesitate a moment to allow, That as this character was peculiar to God before the Messiah came, so it is now,

and so it must ever be; and that it is absurdly blasphemous to think of applying it to any other. Should it be said, "If any person were to assume this title now, he would be guilty of impiety; because he would wrong Jesus Christ, to whom it belongs;" I answer, He would injure God much more, to whom it really appertains. And if any man, who should usurp it at this day, would rob Christ of his honour; he, who should have dared to assume it before the Redeemer came, would have committed sacrilege on the true God. Hence it appears, that this character is peculiar to the Great Supreme.

Again: This title stands among the praises of the Most High; even in those passages where he professedly displays his glories, and asserts his sovereign majesty. Now, if it be not adapted to answer such a design, why should it stand in connexion with those magnificent descriptions of JEHOVAH'S glory? But if it be fitted to express the eternity and majesty, the grandeur and glory of God, it must be peculiar to Him—so peculiar, that it cannot, without blasphemy, be assumed by any mere creature. It is so connected with other characters and attributes, which are confessedly peculiar to God, that it is impossible, without rendering the finest oracles of the prophets nonsensical, to distinguish it from them. Sometimes, for instance, it is connected with his *power*. "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the First and with the Last; I am He," Isa. xli. 4. Sometimes it is joined with the characters of his *grandeur* and *majesty*. "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside me there is no God," Isa. xliv. 6. Here it is observable, that after the

Most High has taken to himself this truly sublime title, he adds, "Beside Me there is no God;" to inform us, that none but himself possesses the dominion and glory implied in it, and in those which attend it. At other times he connects the glory of this title with that which attends his character as *Creator*. "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am He; I am the First, I also am the Last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth," Isa. xlviii. 12, 13. Once more: It is used to express the *unity* of God; for thus it is explained: "Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me," Isa. xliii. 10. But if this title were not peculiar to the eternal God, how could it signify his unity?

Further: When Jesus calls himself, "The First and the Last," he either applies the august character in the *same* sense in which it was used by the prophets, or in one that is *different*. If the *latter*, he leads men by ambiguous expressions into error and idolatry. Nay, on the principles of our opponents, he is guilty of blasphemy; because he assumes a title, in an absolute manner, which does not agree to him but with a restriction. He alters, by his own authority, the signification of terms consecrated by a Divine use. He does what no honest and sensible man ever did; for he changes the known and ordinary meaning of words relating to matters of the greatest importance, without giving us the least notice of it; and, by so doing, he opens a door for impiety and blasphemy to the whole world: for, as he attributes to himself such titles as are given to the true God, by changing mentally the established signification of words in the Old Testament, why may not I, or any other man, after his example, assume the principal characters of the Messiah, by changing mentally,

according to my fancy, the most known signification of expressions in the New Testament. But if he apply the character in the *same* sense in which it was used by the prophets, then he describes himself by a title which they considered as expressing the eternity and unity, the dominion and glory of God. And, by so doing, he practically declares that it is not peculiar to the God of Israel, to whom only the prophets applied it, and, consequently, the language of the prophets is false. For if the God of Jacob be He, before and after whom no God has been formed, how can Jesus be God, and a God also before whom no God existed or shall be formed? The consequence is, either Christ is the true God, or he is guilty of blasphemy, in attributing to himself a title, which, in the language of the prophets, is peculiar to the infinite God.

If Jesus Christ be a mere man, one cannot imagine how this title can possibly belong to him. For, either *First* and *Last* must be understood of a priority and posteriority of *time*, or of a priority and posteriority of *dignity*, or of *both*. If the *first*, the sense will be, I am the First and the Last *in duration*. But how could one that was born in the fullness of time be the *first* in duration? If the *second*, the meaning must be, I am the First and the Last *in dignity*. But how can Jesus be the *last* in dignity, when John the Baptist, who was greater than any of the ancient prophets, considered himself as unworthy to loose the latchet of his shoe? If the *third*, then the signification of the words must either be, I am the *First* in time, and the *Last* in dignity, which is manifestly false; or thus, I am the First in *dignity*, and the Last in *time*, which is equally false. For how can Jesus be the Last in *time*? Was he the last *man* that was born? That cannot be. Nor

was he the last of God's *servants*; for there have been many who served God faithfully, and were the honoured instruments of his glory, since the ascension of Christ. Or thus, I am the First and the Last in *time* and in *dignity*, which is yet more glaringly false. For if he be not the First and the Last in *time*, nor the First and the Last in *dignity*, it is doubly false to say that he is so in both the one and the other. But our business here is not so much with the *truth* of his words, as with the *impression* they were adapted to make on the minds of the Jews, who were taught by the prophets. On hearing Jesus repeatedly and solemnly apply this title to himself, they could not but consider him as usurping a character peculiar to the eternal JEHOVAH, and, consequently, as guilty of blasphemy. Either, then, the Jews were to blame for opposing impiety, blasphemy, and idolatry, or they could not avoid passing sentence of condemnation upon Jesus Christ, if he spake as his disciples wrote, and if they have given a true representation of his claims, his language, and his conduct; at least they could not avoid rejecting the gospel, the preachers of it being so evidently convicted of blasphemy.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS CHRIST DECLARED TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD.

PAUL asserts, in the plainest manner, that Jesus "thought it not robbery to be EQUAL WITH GOD," Phil. ii. 6. We shall see in the prosecution of our subject, the vanity of those evasions to which our adversaries have recourse, in explaining this passage

so as to agree with their hypothesis. But, however we understand the text, it must be allowed to attribute to Jesus Christ some kind of *equality* with his Father, who is confessedly the true God.

Some, perhaps, may say, "No conclusion can be drawn from a single expression; such a one especially as ought not to be understood in the strictly literal sense; because there are examples of a similar expression, one of which is found in Homer, where it does not signify a real and proper equality with God." To which I reply, It is very unbecoming to produce examples of this kind from Homer, did he afford ever so many. For it is notorious, that the writings of the heathens, and especially those of the poets, abound with impiety and blasphemies. This consideration enhances the value of the Scriptures. For it is their inseparable characteristic to maintain a wide, an immense distinction between God and the creature, by never attributing to the *latter* what belongs only to the *former*; while in human writings men are equalled with God, and God is confounded with men. It is worthy also of being remarked, that Paul is the sacred penman who uses this way of speaking; and he, it is well known, is ever careful to exalt the grace of God, and to refer all to his glory. "We have," says this ambassador of Christ, "this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7. Besides, these expressions being of a very peculiar kind, and such as do not readily come into a person's thoughts, plainly intimate that he had a *particular design* in penning them. "But here, perhaps, they may be hyperbolical." If they be, they intrench on the glory of God. When, upon strict examination, we have nothing to object against a hyperbole, but

its want of *truth*, the fault is comparatively small; but there should be no reason to charge it with being *impious* and *blasphemous*. Thus, for instance, the Scriptures never say, "That a man is as good, as wise, or as powerful as God;" because such expressions and such comparisons are impious and full of blasphemy. This evil the writers of the Old Testament have avoided with remarkable care; and they who penned the New, ought to have been still more on their guard against it, because it was foretold as a distinguishing character of the gospel dispensation, that "the pride of man should be abased, and the LORD ALONE exalted."

Though I might here greatly enlarge, I shall confine myself to the following considerations. God had repeatedly and solemnly declared by the prophets, that there is "none like him." For thus it is written; "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?" Isa. xl. 18, 25; xlvi. 5. These expressions were intended, and well adapted to confound idolatry; and the truth contained in them was made by JEHOVAH the grand principle of his religion, which Paul could not but know, being well versed in the ancient oracles. But though he hears, understands, and reveres that voice from heaven which demands, "To whom will ye *liken* me? To whom will ye make me *equal*?" yet he boldly asserts, Jesus "thought it not robbery to be EQUAL with God." Again: The apostle could not but know the ground, or, if you will, the pretence, on which Christ was condemned by the Jews, that is, because he asserted his *likeness* to God, and *equality*

with him. This was a prodigious offence to men who had heard God say by his prophets, "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal?" Paul does what he can to convert the Jews to the Christian faith; yet he never attempts to justify the religion of Jesus from the charge of equalling a creature with the Creator; though, on the principles of our opponents, it was highly necessary for him so to have done, for the salvation of men and the glory of God. Nay, so far was he from endeavouring to acquit the cause of his Master from such a charge, that he roundly asserts, Jesus "thought it not robbery to be **EQUAL** with God;" which is the very thing for which the Jews were so offended with Christ, and on account of which they considered him as deserving judgment of death. But can it be supposed that he who rent his garments when he was taken for Mercury, who was a subordinate god among the heathens, can it, I say, be supposed that this very man should equal a mere creature with the **INFINITE GOD**? If he does, his hyperboles surely must be very edifying, and peculiarly well timed! And does it not highly become him to set up for an orator, at the expense of piety and the glory of God!

The language of the apostles, in other places, is an infallible comment on these expressions. For they not only apply the name, God, to their crucified Saviour; but they annex the same ideas to it which were affixed to the character of **JEHOVAH** by the ancient prophets. Seeing, then, the apostles give such titles to Christ as could not belong to him, if he were not a Divine Person and equal with the Father; we ought not to question but Paul here uses the term *equal*, in a proper and literal sense. Further: Either these expressions are adopted by Christians,

or they are not. If the *latter*, it must be because they think the apostle spake unadvisedly; which subverts the credit of his writings, and saps the foundation of Christianity itself. If the *former*, then we may safely conclude, that the other apostles spake after the same manner. And if so, we appeal to our adversaries, Whether the Jews, who heard them speak thus, are not to be justified in calling them blasphemers? when, on the one part, they saw that Christ was a mere creature; and, on the other, that his disciples asserted his equality with God.

When Jehovah says, "To whom will ye liken me?" he does not mean to exclude a resemblance of *analogy*; for as he exists, thinks, and acts, so do rational creatures: but his design is, to exclude a resemblance of *equality*. Now, the one or the other of these must be intended in the text before us. Not the *former*; for if you ascribe to Christ a resemblance of *analogy* only, you attribute nothing to him, but what may be affirmed of angels, of saints, and of men in common: and yet neither Gabriel, nor Paul, nor any man living, could say, "I think it not robbery to be equal with God;" without being guilty of blasphemy. It must, therefore, be a resemblance of *equality*, which is here attributed to Jesus Christ, according to the natural sense of the term. But though the meaning of the adjective *equal*, be sometimes well expressed by the word *like*; as when God says, "Who is like to me?" Yet, when the term *like* is taken for *resembling*, or *conformable*, it is never expressed by the word *equal*. Nor is that equality, which is here attributed to Christ, *metaphorical*. For to consider the apostle as saying, "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God," by a metaphor, is absurd and ridiculous. Besides, as before observed,

those figures are impious, which convey an idea contrary to the glory of God.

As the Jews were not culpable for speaking like other men, especially like their own prophets, who instructed them; so they are not to be blamed for concluding, that none can be said to be "equal with God," except he be God, or except he wrong God. Nor could they help thinking, that the apostles cordially approved of such language concerning Jesus Christ: for if not, why did they use it? "But they explain themselves, on other occasions." Supposing they did, this proposition, Jesus, a mere creature, thinks it not robbery to be equal with God, would still be impious. Besides, by such explanations they would pull down with one hand, what they build with the other.

To conclude: If Jesus be *not* equal with God, it must be a sin to *think* that he is; and if so, why should any one *assert* it? To what end were those expressions needful? To the glory of God? No; they dishonour the Deity. To exalt Jesus Christ? But cannot he be exalted without setting him on a level with God? Was it to show the accomplishment of the ancient oracles? But they frequently declare, that there is only *one* God, and that nothing is *like* him. Was it to edify men? But is it possible for men to be edified, by hearing of a creature, of one that owes his being to Divine power, and his blessedness to Divine favour, being exalted to an equality with his Maker? Peter and Paul were not only the disciples, but also the *ambassadors* of Christ, and their characters are justly held in very high esteem, by every lover of sacred truth; yet if either of them had said, "I think it not robbery to be equal with Jesus Christ," we should have called him a