

CHAPTER VI.

EVIDENCES OF THE SAME TRUTH, ARISING FROM THOSE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, WHICH EXPRESS THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE Scripture informs us, that Christ existed before he was conceived in the womb of Mary; that he was before John the Baptist; that the prophets were inspired by him; that he was before Abraham; that he was in the beginning of all things; and that he was before all ages. The Divine records assert, that he was "in the form of God;" and, afterwards, "made himself of no reputation," by taking "upon him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 1. He, therefore, must have existed before his humiliation; and consequently, before his conception in the virgin's womb. The same infallible rule of our faith declares, that he "was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh," Rom. i. 3. Certainly, then, in his wonderful Person there must be a nature distinct from the human; a nature, in respect of which, he was *not* made of the seed of David. An unerring writer calls him, "GOD manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Which must imply, that he who was thus manifested, existed prior to his appearance in a corporeal nature. An evangelist informs us, that THE WORD, who was in the beginning, and was God, "was made flesh," John i. 4; which necessarily supposes that He existed before that flesh to which he was united.

Again: Jesus himself affirms, with a solemn asseveration, a kind of oath, "Verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58. Either, therefore, he existed before that renowned patriarch was

born, or his words convey a false idea; that being the natural signification of the terms, and the first impression they make on our minds. Peter, speaking of the ancient prophets, represents them, as diligently "searching what, or what manner of time the SPIRIT OF CHRIST which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that shall follow," 1 Pet. i. 11. But if Jesus did not exist in the times of the prophets, they could not speak, they could not write, by his Spirit, or by his inspiration. Hence we learn, that the Spirit of Christ was no less really granted to them, under the Mosaic economy, than he was afterwards to the apostles. He existed, therefore, in the times of the former, as well as in those of the latter. For there is no reason to suppose, that the Spirit, by whose direction the Hebrew seers predicted the sufferings and glory of God's Messiah, is called the "Spirit of Christ," merely because they prophesied concerning him. The prophets foretold the coming and ministry of the apostles; but is that a sufficient reason to say, that the spirit of the apostles was in them? The evangelist John asserts, that Christ "was in the beginning; that he was with God;" and that "by him all things were made," John i. 1—3. Consequently, he existed before time commenced, and before the world was formed. But, not to multiply quotations, I shall only once more observe, that Christ, when addressing his Divine Father, says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John xvii. 5. And, in another place, with great solemnity, and with an air of Divine authority, he calls himself, "The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," Rev. xxii. 13.

Now, if we admit the venerable and august Speaker to talk sensibly, and to mean as he speaks, we must conclude, that he existed before the creation, and possessed a Divine glory prior to the birth of time.

To judge of the plain and natural import of these passages, we need only to consider the impression they have made on the minds of men, for so many ages, since the Scripture was penned. The Socinians may choose what arbitrators they please, to determine the direct and natural signification of the expressions. If they suspect either the judgment or the impartiality of the orthodox, will they trust the *Arians*? who are not prepossessed in favour of the proper Deity of Jesus Christ, any more than themselves. But if they should consider the disciples of Arius as incompetent judges, will they trust the *Mohammedans*? who agree with Socinus in rejecting, not only the eternal Divinity, but also the pre-existence of Christ. Yet the Mussulmans will tell them, that they see the same, in the passages adduced, that we do; which obliges them to reject the New Testament, as being either entirely supposititious, or essentially corrupted. And, indeed, it may admit of a query, whether we have not reason to suspect that this is the secret persuasion of our adversaries; seeing their interpretations of these passages are so various, and some of them so contradictory. It is probable, for instance, that the natural impression of these words, "Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58, suggested to Socinus that interpretation of them, which he says cost him so much labour, and which God did not discover to him till after he had spent several days in prayer. And yet, it is very observable, that his pretended divinely revealed sense of the text was never adopted by the teachers of his persuasion. Nor is it any wonder that

they should unanimously reject it. For if when our Lord said, "Before Abraham was, I am;" he only meant, "I am, before Abraham was, what the name *Abraham* signifies, that is, *The father of many nations*;" in other words, That Christ existed before the gentiles became the children of Abraham; if, I say, this be the meaning of Jesus, never were any expressions of a more obscure, fallacious, and ensnaring kind. But this novel and far-fetched interpretation, is absolutely void of truth. For the words, "Before Abraham was," do not signify, "Before that eminent patriarch was *Abraham*;" but before he who was honoured with that expressive name had *a being*; before he was in the world. Even as these words, "Before Pompey the Great was;" do not signify, "Before Pompey was surnamed, or was really *the Great*;" but before he *existed*. Besides, the gloss of Socinus renders the assertion of Jesus absurd. For what mighty wonder was it, that He should exist before the gentiles became the children of Abraham? The very meanest person, who lived at that time, might have said the same of himself.

But another Socinian writer gives a more plausible interpretation of the text. He supposes, that Jesus was before Abraham, in the same sense in which he is called, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In answer to which I observe, That the two passages are far from being parallel. The *latter* is evidently figurative; as appears by the term *slain*, or *sacrificed*, and by other circumstances of the text. But in the *former*, everything leads to the literal sense. It is an objection purely literal which the Jews make when they say, "Thou art not yet fifty years old," John viii. 57. Nor does the text before us, which so strongly denotes the pre-existence

of Christ, express anything, when so understood, but what is contained in great numbers of others. Besides, to render these two passages perfectly similar, we must suppose it recorded in Scripture, "That Jesus, being in the form of a sacrifice, was afterwards pleased to take upon him the form of a man; that he came from suffering when he appeared in the world; that he died before Abraham was; that his crucifixion and death were from ancient times; that he suffered from the beginning, or ever the earth was; and that, just before he made his exit on Calvary, he thus addressed his Father, Behold me, ready to endure the same sufferings which I underwent with thee before the world was." But would not such language be considered as false, absurd, and ridiculous? Would not such a way of speaking concerning Jesus Christ be detested; even though it must be allowed, that the Holy Spirit does call him, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world?" Rev. xiii. 8.

Further: In the passage quoted from the Revelation, there seems to be one of those transpositions which are common in the Scriptures, and in all sorts of authors; and if so, it may be thus rendered, "And all that are upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written, from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb slain." (Compare Rev. xvii. 8.) These words, "From the foundation of the world," being connected with, "written in the book of life." For eternal predestination to grace and holiness, to happiness and glory, is the thing intended by those expressions; and that Divine purpose respecting the chosen of God, is represented as the reason why they shall not worship the beast, and perish in their iniquity. Such being the general sense of the text, it does not seem at all necessary to

suppose, that the eternal efficacy of our Lord's atonement made on the cross is intended by these words, "Slain from the foundation of the world;" though we readily allow, that all the people of God from the beginning, were pardoned and saved in virtue of it. And though, according to this translation, the term *slain* is transposed, yet, when it is considered that Jesus is represented in the Revelation of John, not only as a *lamb*, but also as a *lamb slain* and *sacrificed*, we have no reason to wonder that the names of the elect are said to be written, not only "in the book of *the Lamb*," but in that of the *Lamb slain*."

In reference, therefore, to these words, "Before Abraham was, I am," our adversaries must either say, that Christ was before Abraham in the purpose of God, or, that he was before that illustrious patriarch became the father of many nations. But these interpretations are contemptibly weak, and render the expressions absolutely unworthy of the Divine Speaker. Is it not very surprising, think you, that Christ should have existed in the decree of God before Abraham was born! There is nothing in this which may not be said of all men universally, who have lived since that patriarch's time. Is it not also astonishing, that the Messiah should exist before the gentiles were become the children of Abraham! This was true of all the apostles, even of Judas the traitor. And was it to confirm such childish fancies as these, that the Wonderful Counsellor and the Wisdom of God made use of that solemn asseveration, *verily!* "VERILY, VERILY, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."

But admitting there was a difficulty in this passage, which, to us, appears so clear, so express and peremptory; yet it would be but reasonable to explain it by

many other parallel places, which evidently assert the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. It is an easy matter for a man of learning, of genius, and of a fruitful invention, to find out a number of subtle distinctions, but it is not so easy for him to rest satisfied in them when they are invented. When they tell me, for instance, "That Christ was before the prophets, and before Abraham, in excellence and dignity, and that we understand of a priority in *existence* what the Scripture speaks of a pre-eminence in *dignity*," my judgment cannot acquiesce in it: for the word of inspiration assures me repeatedly, that the Lord Redeemer "is the First and the Last." Here the distinction is of no avail, but rather tends to embarrass them. For he is the first in that respect in which he ought to be the *last*; for they will not say that he is the last in dignity. It cannot, therefore, be a priority of excellence that is here meant. And how comes He to be represented to us as, "without *beginning* of days." We cannot examine all those passages which speak of the pre-existence and eternal Divinity of our adored Redeemer, but we shall consider a few more of them with particular care.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SAME TRUTH EVINCED, FROM PHIL. II. 5—8.

PAUL, in his epistle to the church of Christ at Philippi, says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness

of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This emphatical and admirable passage is thus paraphrased by the Socinians: "Who, being in the form of God; commanding the creatures and controlling the elements when he was upon earth, as if he had been God, did not detain and obstinately insist on an equality with God, as one that is guilty of robbery. But he renounced this equality to make himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant in obeying, though he commanded before, being treated as a slave, and becoming like ordinary men: and this though he was before in the form of God, by the power with which he was invested; and, showing himself obedient, he submitted to the death of the cross." Such is the interpretation of our adversaries. But, it may be observed, that these expressions, "In the form of God; thought it not robbery; made himself of no reputation; took the form of a servant," suffer manifest violence by this explanation. The following considerations may serve to show the inconsistency there is between the text and the comment.

When we meet with a singular expression in Scripture, it is natural to explain it by such as are parallel, or, at least, have some likeness to it. Our opponents, therefore, if they consider this phrase, "being in the form of God," as extraordinary, should compare it with those passages which in their natural import signify nearly the same thing. Such, for instance, as the following; "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. The true God; God blessed for ever," John i. 1, 3; 1 John v. 20; Rom. ix. 5. Does Paul in-

form us, that our Lord was "in the form of God," before he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant? Conformably to this John declares, that "the Word was in the beginning, and that the Word was God." As, according to the one, the Word was God before he was made flesh, so, according to the other, Christ was in the form of God prior to his taking the form of a servant, or his appearance in human nature. Thus both express the same thing, and support the same truth.

Whence had our opposers their signification of the phrase, "being in the form of God?" In what language, human or Divine, do they find it signify, *to work miracles*? If the performance of a multitude of miracles were a sufficient ground of saying, that he who wrought them was in the form of God, Moses had a claim to the honour, for he performed astonishing works in the air, the earth, and the waters. Nay, the apostles were in the form of God, for they wrought very wonderful miracles, even greater, in some respects, than those of Christ himself, in pursuance of his own promise. "Jesus," it may perhaps be said, "wrought miracles in his own name and by his own power, but the apostles performed theirs in the name and by the power of their Lord."—But if Jesus wrought miracles in his own name and by his own power, our opposers must either give up one of their strongest objections against our sentiments, or contradict themselves in the most palpable manner. For some of the most learned and ingenious among them suppose, that they embarrass our cause exceedingly when they remind us, that "Christ came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. That the doctrine he taught was not his own, but the Father's. And that he who believes, does not believe

on Jesus, but on Him that sent him," John v. 30; vii. 17; xii. 44. They insist upon it, that "the Father was the chief Author of those wonderful works which Jesus did; that the Father was the real Author of his resurrection; that the Father does all things by the Son, and that the Son can do nothing of himself."—If, then, Jesus performed miracles not in his own name and by his own power, but in the name and by the power of the Father, he was no more independent of God when he wrought them, than the apostles were when they astonished the world by numbers of miraculous facts. Consequently, if they cannot be said to have been "in the form of God," because they did nothing but in the name and by the power of their Master, neither can Jesus be so considered, because he did nothing but in the name and by the power of his Father.

Nor are the Socinians able to fix upon the *time* when Christ was "in the form of God," without contradicting themselves, or confronting the Scripture. For, either it was during the thirty years which he lived as a private person, or after he appeared in a public character, between the time of his baptism and that of his death. Not the *former*; because in all that space of time we do not find that he wrought any miracles. Nor can it be the *latter*; for if it were, he must have assumed the form of God at that very time when he began most evidently to *humble* himself; even when he was tempted of the devil, and began to suffer all the inconveniences of life, and all the outrage of persecution. But is it possible, without the most glaring impropriety and the greatest absurdity, to call a state of extreme poverty, and shame, and affliction, a "being in the form of God?" The miracles which Jesus wrought were after he

humbled himself, after he was laid in a manger, after he escaped the fury of a tyrant thirsting for his blood, and after he returned from his exile in Egypt. So that if he was "in the form of God," because he controlled the course of nature, and exercised dominion over the creatures, in the wonderful miracles which he performed, it must necessarily follow, that he was not in that Divine form till after he began to humble himself and to make himself of no reputation; which is a direct contradiction of the sacred text.

Again: To understand these words, "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God," in the sense of our adversaries, is inconsistent with the occasion of them and the scope of the place. Paul, it is manifest, mentions the conduct of Jesus Christ as a wonderful, astonishing, unparalleled instance of condescension, with a view to enforce his exhortations to humility. But if Jesus be a mere man, or only an exalted creature, it is no wonder that he "did not obstinately insist," that he did not so much as *think* "on an equality with God;" for, in so doing, he would have been guilty of Luciferian pride, and of the most impious robbery.

By considering these two clauses in their proper connexion, "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God," we have a further proof of the truth for which we contend. For it is evident that our Lord's claim of "*equality* with God," is here founded by the apostle, on his "*existing in the form of God*," and not on his performing of any works whatever. Nor ought the two terms, *υπαρχων* and *λαβων*, which stand opposed in the passage, to be overlooked. It is very observable, that the apostle uses the *former* when he speaks of the "form of God," asserting that Jesus *existed* in that

Divine form ; plainly signifying, that it was not an accidental and transient thing, but a property belonging to his glorious Person, and therefore permanent. But when he speaks of the opposite form, he employs the *latter* of those expressions, and says, he *received* it ; evidently denoting that it was not essential, but foreign and accidental to him. For he who *receives* a form, is not supposed to have had it always, nor is it considered as essential to him. Besides, if Jesus be a mere creature, he never was, nor ever can be, strictly speaking, in any form but that of a *servant* in respect of the eternal Sovereign.

But as the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Scripture, is his own best interpreter, it is proper to compare this passage with others, in order to see its genuine meaning. When the apostle speaks of Jesus Christ, as “being in the form of God,” as being “equal with God,” and yet informs us that he “took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation,” we cannot but consider the Lord Redeemer as existing in two very different *states* ; a state of the sublimest glory preceding, and a state of the deepest humiliation following. So, when we advert to that saying, “He was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh,” Rom. i. 3, we have the idea of *two natures* in our Divine Saviour : one, in respect of which he is David’s offspring ; the other, such as constitutes him David’s Lord. One, the existence of which commenced at his conception ; the other, without beginning and unchangeable. These two passages, it is evident, are perfectly correspondent. For, if Jesus existed before he was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, it must have been either in the form of man, or in the form of God. Not the *former* ; for then he must have existed in

flesh prior to his being made of the seed of David, according to the flesh ; which is absurd, and contrary to the testimony of the Holy Ghost. It must, consequently, be the *latter* ; that is, before his incarnation he existed in the form of God, and in that only.

This will appear in a stronger light, if we consider the following passage ; “ God was manifest in the flesh,” 1 Tim. iii. 16. Christ existed before he was in the flesh. For though he was made of the seed of David, yet not absolutely, but “ according to the flesh.” Christ was GOD, for GOD was manifest in that flesh which was made of the seed of David. By comparing this and the two preceding passages together, it appears, That Jesus Christ existed in the form of God ; that he was God ; and might, consequently, be considered as equal with the Father, before that flesh which was made of the seed of David, and in which God was manifested, had a being.

Once more : He who is the true and faithful Witness asserts, concerning himself, “ I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go to the Father,” John xvii. 28. Before our Lord came into the world he was not made of the seed of David, was not flesh, nor manifested in the flesh, nor was he in the form of a servant. No ; considered in his first state he was the Son, the only Son of the Father ; that Divine Person who, existing in the form of God, and being God, was to be manifested in flesh ; was to be the wonderful IMMANUEL.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SAME TRUTH CONFIRMED AND ILLUSTRATED FROM JOHN I. 1—14.—THE SOCINIAN INTERPRETATION OF THIS PASSAGE CONSIDERED AND EXPOSED.

THE beginning of the Gospel, according to the evangelist John, would be quite unintelligible, were we to deny the pre-existence and eternal Divinity of Jesus Christ. The following expressions, for instance, “In the beginning was the Word; The Word was with God, the Word was God; All things were made by him; The Word was made flesh; The world was made by him;” these expressions, I say, taken in any other view, are no better, are no other, than incomprehensible nonsense: and men who are not obliged to understand that which is in itself unintelligible, cannot be culpable for not discovering a sense in them, which is contrary to the natural signification of the terms.

“In the beginning was the Word.” Our exposition has nothing obscure, nothing perplexed in it; but that of our opponents is far-fetched and jejune, is forced and unnatural. They insist upon it, that by “the beginning,” the *commencement* of the gospel dispensation is intended. But so to interpret the phrase, is to restrain a general expression to a particular and uncommon sense, without the least warrant from the circumstances and scope of the place, and is nothing short of offering violence to the text. It cannot be supposed, with the least shadow of reason, that a *particular* beginning is meant, because nothing precedes it, nothing follows it, so to determine the sense; or which gives the least intimation that the expression ought to be understood in a significa-

tion different from that which it usually has. For these words begin the gospel, and are repeated by the evangelist afterwards, without giving any notice of their being used in a particular sense. To imagine that a mental reservation may determine general expressions to a particular meaning, is a great mistake. Any one writing the history of Augustus would be very impertinent if he should say, "In the beginning was Augustus," meaning, that he lived from the time of Julius Cæsar. Or, if a man were to write the history of Moses, and the surprising things which the God of Israel wrought by his ministry, and should introduce the wonderful narrative thus, "In the beginning was Moses," meaning, he was from the time that God began to deliver the seed of Jacob from Egyptian bondage. For these mental explanations would not prevent the language from being contrary to good sense, because it would be unintelligible.

If the evangelist's meaning had been what they suppose, he might have explained himself by saying, "Jesus Christ lived from the beginning of the gospel." Yet even then his expressions would not have been free from obscurity; because we should have been at a loss to know from what period, or from what event, this *beginning* of the gospel was to be dated. For if you understand the first glad tidings of the great salvation, which was to be accomplished by Jesus Christ, it is evident, on the principles of our opponents, that He did not then exist; the prophets having published the salvation of God long before the Messiah's conception. If, by this beginning, you understand the time when the prophetic oracles began to be fulfilled; then, I demand why it is not dated from the time of Gabriel's appearance to Zacharias or to Mary? Or, from the time that the father of

John the Baptist, being filled with the Holy Spirit, described the honourable and important work of his new-born son, and foretold the immediate appearance of Christ? Or, from the day that Simeon uttered his comprehensive prophecy, with the infant Saviour in his arms?

To that remarkable character, **THE WORD**, our adversaries give several significations, which appear to be invented only out of necessity to defend their cause. "It includes," say they, "a metaphor, or a metonymy." But if they dealt ingenuously, they would fix either upon the one or the other; for one figure would be sufficient to answer the purpose. But what would suffice in itself, does not satisfy our opponents; and the mistrust they have of the one, makes them have recourse to the other. For, we may venture to say, it is not the sense of Scripture they give us, but their own mistakes, which they seem determined to defend.

This appears from their comment on the following clause, "The Word was with God." For if it were lawful to take these expressions in a signification which is not natural to them, several senses might be found equally proper with that which they have palmed upon them. Would these terms, "The Word was with God," bear to be interpreted thus, "The Word was known of God only;" why might we not insist upon it, that their more natural signification is, "The Word was hid in heaven?" or "The Word was beloved of God?" or, "The Word only knew the counsel of God?" These are more probable significations of the text, and yet they fix upon this, "The Word was known of God only;" or, according to others, "He was appointed of God to his office."

In much the same awkward and unwarrantable manner they interpret the following remarkable and emphatical assertion, "The Word was GOD;" that is, according to them, "Everything in Jesus was Divine; so that the ministry of the prophets, compared with his, was human." Had they been satisfied with this interpretation; had they not been conscious of its futility, they would not have added, "Jesus is called GOD, because he sustained, or was to sustain, the person of God." Nor can they entirely acquiesce in this; they, therefore, proceed and assert, "That Christ was appointed to a supreme glory and power; and because he could not fail of enjoying this power and glory, he is called GOD." But what ambiguity is this, to give such different explanations of the same expressions! Or, how great is that obscurity which, in a single word, conceals so many things, and renders them so very difficult to be unfolded!

"All things were made by Him; The world was made by Him."—These two clauses are parallel; yet they find out a way to render them very different. *All things*, is expressed by *the world*; *were made*, by *the world was made*. They, however, have found out the secret to set these expressions at a prodigious distance one from another; understanding by *all things*, all that pertain to the gospel; and by *the world*, the world to come, heaven, or the society of men; by *all things were made*, all things were formed or produced; and by *the world was made*, the world was renewed. It is plain, from this different way of explaining synonymous passages, that their main design is to support their own sentiments, how perplexed soever they may render the sacred text.

Of this we have a further proof, by their asserting that the term *world* is used in three different and

remote senses in the same verse; that is, for the society of men, for heaven, and for carnal or profane men. But if we must take one term in three different senses, in the same place; who, without a spirit of divination, can be certain that he understands any part of the sacred records; or that, in any instance, he has discovered the meaning of the Holy Ghost? So to treat the inspired writings is not to interpret, but to accommodate them to our own erroneous opinions.

But besides that variety of interpretations which they give to the same expressions, they attribute to the evangelist different *ends*; so very different, as to be sometimes directly opposite one to another. Nor can this proceed from a want of discernment; for we readily acknowledge that we have to do with writers of great ingenuity, but from that embarrassment in which the necessity of defending their cause involves them, there being so many express passages of Scripture directly contrary to their avowed sentiments.

If we believe them, "the design of the Holy Spirit, in the beginning of the gospel according to John, is to obviate an objection which might be made to the dignity of Jesus Christ, from the precedence which John the Baptist had, in respect of time." But when they are urged to show why Christ is here called GOD, there being no necessity that he should bear that sublime name to distinguish him from the son of Zacharias, for every perplexity they have a new evasion; they pretend, "that the evangelist, thinking no more of John the Baptist, intends to distinguish Jesus by the name, GOD, from all the ancient prophets, because their ministry, compared with his, was human." Here are several designs ascribed to the inspired writer, let us now examine them.

The evangelist is afraid we should “prefer John the servant, to Christ the master, because the Baptist came before him.”—For the same reason he might have been apprehensive, that we should prefer Moses and the prophets to Him of whom they spake, because they lived before him. But, admitting there was any danger of looking upon the Baptist as the Messiah, when he began to preach the gospel; yet the danger was entirely over, as soon as John was beheaded, and Jesus was risen from the dead. Supposing, however, the evangelist did apprehend that some would be so simple as to prefer John to Christ, on account of his coming before him, how does he obviate this mistake? He is entirely silent when he should speak, and he speaks when he should hold his tongue. The *former*: for he does not say, The servants go before their Master; the prophets were before the coming of the Messiah, though they were less than He; and, therefore, we must not wonder that the venerable Baptist appeared before Jesus Christ, being commissioned to prepare his way, and to make his paths straight. The *latter*: for he says, Jesus was from the beginning of John’s ministry; which does not remove the objection at all. For though He was from that time, as well as John, yet the Baptist exercised the functions of his ministry, while Jesus did nothing; which is the very difficulty the evangelist should have prevented.

But though we cannot find, in the interpretation of our opponents, such designs as are worthy of the Holy Spirit, yet we meet with such disorder and confusion in it, as can only agree to a spirit who intended either to lead us into error, or to speak so as not to be understood. For, by these words, “In the beginning,” they maintain that the commencement of the

Baptist's ministry is intended; even though it is manifest, that the evangelist has not only not yet *mentioned* John, but does not speak of him till he has concluded his sublime encomium on the **DIVINE WORD**; and then does it in such a manner, as plainly to show, that he means to speak of him for the *first* time, saying, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was JOHN."

Further: In that beginning which is here intended, "the Word was—was with God—and was God." But not a tittle of this agrees to Jesus Christ, according to their hypothesis, and their interpretation of the text. He was not then the *Word*; for he had not, at that time, published the counsel of God. He was not *with God*; at least, not in a proper sense; for, according to them, he was not translated into heaven till after his baptism. Nor was he *God*; for he was not then invested with his offices, in the execution of which he represents God, and bears his name.

It would be but a small matter for the words of the evangelist to want *order*, if they were not destitute of *truth*; but, admitting the interpretation of our adversaries, we can hardly doubt of their falsehood. Certain it is, however, that we may substitute contradictory propositions in the place of those which the sacred writer has used, which will appear much more intelligible, and much more agreeable, in their proper signification, to truth and fact. For instance: "Jesus Christ was *not* in the beginning of the gospel. He was *not* the Word from the beginning. He was *not* then with God. He was *not* God. All things, even all that respect the economy of the gospel, were *not* made by him; for several of them were made without him, before him, and after him. The world was *not* made by him. The Word was *not* made flesh; but

flesh was made the Word. He is the light, but *not* that light which illuminates every man that cometh into the world."

"Jesus Christ was not in *the beginning* of the gospel." This proposition, on their hypothesis, is undoubtedly true: the embassy of the angel to Zacharias, giving the true beginning to this gospel; which was afterwards continued by sending another celestial envoy to the shepherds of Bethlehem, by the preaching of John the Baptist, and by that of Jesus and his apostles. "Jesus was *not*, in this beginning, *the Word*," neither by a metaphor, nor by a metonymy. Not by a *metaphor*: for it could not then be said, As a man's word discovers his thoughts, so Jesus manifests the thoughts and counsel of God. Not by a *metonymy*: for he could not borrow that name from words which he had not then spoken, nor caused to be published. "He was *not God*," in whatever sense that august name be understood. He could not be so called "because his ministry was *Divine*," as opposed to that of the prophets; for he did not then exercise his ministry. Nor "because he sustained the person of God;" for he did not then represent God in anywise. Nor "because he was appointed to the enjoyment of Divine power and glory;" for the ordinary style of Scripture will not admit of it. It is nowhere said, for instance, that Saul was an apostle, a light of the church, or a teacher of the Gentiles, in the beginning of the gospel, when he was full of persecuting rage against the disciples of Christ, because he was then appointed to the apostleship. Nor, that Moses was a mediator between God and the Israelites, in the beginning; that is, from the time that he fed the cattle of Jethro. Nor, that the sons of Zebedee were the sons of