

THE END OF THEOLOGY

We have been engaged in viewing the Author; let us now advert to the End. This is the more eminent and divine according to the greater excellence of that matter of which it is the end. In that light, therefore, this science is far more illustrious and transcendent than all others; because it alone has a relation to the life that is spiritual and supernatural, and has an End beyond the boundaries of the present life: while all other sciences have respect to this animal life, and each has an End proposed to itself, extending from the center of this earthly life and included within its circumference. Of this science, then, that may be truly said which the poet declared concerning his wise friend, "For those things alone he feels any relish, the rest like shadows fly." I repeat it, "they fly away," unless they be referred to this science, and firmly fix their foot upon it and be at rest. But the same person who is the Author and Object, is also the End of Theology. The very proportion and analogy of these things make such a connection requisite. For since the Author is the First and the Chief Being, it is of necessity that he be the First and Chief Good. He is, therefore, the extreme End of all things. And since He, the Chief Being and the Chief Good, subjects, lowers and spreads himself out, as an object to some power or faculty of a rational creature, that by its action or motion it may be employed and occupied concerning him, nay, that it may in a sense be united with him; it cannot possibly be, that the creature, after having performed its part respecting that object, should fly beyond it and extend itself further for the sake of acquiring a greater good. It is, therefore, of necessity that it restrain itself within him, not only as within a boundary beyond which it is impossible for it to pass on account of the infinitude of the object and on account of its own importance, but also as within its End and its Good, beyond which, because they are both the Chief in degree, it neither wishes nor is capable of desiring anything; provided this object be united with it as far as the capacity of the creature will admit. God is, therefore, the End of our Theology, proposed by God himself, in the acts prescribed in it; intended by man in the performance of those actions, and to be bestowed by God, after man shall have piously and religiously performed his duty. But because the chief good was not placed in the promise of it, nor in the desire of obtaining it, but in actually receiving it, the end of Theology may with the utmost propriety be called **THE UNION OF GOD WITH MAN**.

But it is not an Essential union, as if two essences, (for instance that of God and man,) were compacted together or joined into one, or as that by which man might himself be absorbed into God. The former of these modes of union is prohibited by the very nature of the things so united, and the latter is rejected by the nature of the union. Neither is it a formal union, as if God by that union might be made in the form of man, like a Spirit united to a body imparting to it life and motion, and acting upon it at pleasure, although, by dwelling in the body, it should confer on man the gift of life eternal. But it is an objective union by which God, through the agency of his pre-eminent and most faithful faculties and

actions, (all of which he wholly occupies and completely fills,) gives such convincing proofs of himself to man, that God may then be said to be "all in all." (1 Cor. xv. 21.) This union is immediate, and without any bond that is different to the limits themselves. For God unites himself to the understanding and to the will of his creature, by means of himself alone, and without the intervention of image, species or appearance. This is what the nature of this last and supreme union requires, as being that in which consists the Chief Good of a rational creature, which cannot find rest except in the greatest union of itself with God. But by this union, the understanding beholds in the clearest vision, and as if "face to face," God himself, and all his goodness and incomparable beauty. And because a good of such magnitude and known by the clearest vision cannot fail of being loved on its own account; from this very consideration the will embraces it with a more intense love, in proportion to the greater degree of knowledge of it which the mind has obtained.

But here a double difficulty presents itself, which must first be removed, in order that our feet may afterwards without stumbling run along a path that will then appear smooth and to have been for some time well trodden. (1.) The one is, "How can it be that the eye of the human understanding does not become dim and beclouded when an object of such transcendent light is presented to it?" (2.)

The other is, "How can the understanding, although its eye may not be dim and blinded, receive and contain that object in such great measure and proportion?" The cause of the first is, that the light exhibits itself to the understanding not in the infinity of its own nature, but in a form that is qualified and attempered. And to what is it thus accommodated? Is it not to the understanding? Undoubtedly, to the understanding; but not according to the capacity which it possessed before the union: otherwise it could not receive and contain as much as would suffice to fill it and make it happy. But it is attempered according to the measure of its extension and enlargement, to admit of which the understanding is exquisitely formed, if it be enlightened and irradiated by the gracious and glorious shining of the light accommodated to that expansion. If it be thus enlightened, the eye of the understanding will not be overpowered and become dim, and it will receive that object in such a vast proportion as will most abundantly suffice to make man completely happy. This is a solution for both these difficulties. But an extension of the understanding will be followed by an enlargement of the will, either from a proper and adequate object offered to it, and accommodated to the same rule; or, (which I prefer,) from the native agreement of the will and understanding, and the analogy implanted in both of them, according to which the understanding extends itself to acts of volition, in the very proportion of its understanding and knowledge. In this act of the mind and will in seeing a present God, in loving him, and therefore in the enjoyment of him, the salvation of man and his perfect happiness consist. To which is added, conformation of our body itself to this glorious state of soul, which, whether it be effected by the immediate action of God on the body, or by means of an agency resulting from the

action of the soul on the body, it is neither necessary for us here to inquire, nor at this time to discover. From hence also arises and shines forth illustriously the chief and infinite glory of God, far surpassing all other glory, that he has displayed in every preceding function which he administered. For since that action is truly great and glorious which is good, and since goodness alone obtains the title of "greatness," according to that elegant saying, to eu mega then indeed the best action of God is the greatest and the most glorious. But that is the best action by which he unites himself immediately to the creature and affords himself to be seen, loved and enjoyed in such an abundant measure as agrees with the creature dilated and expanded to that degree which we have mentioned. This is, therefore, the most glorious of God's actions. Wherefore the end of Theology is the union, God with man, to the salvation of the one and the glory of the other; and to the glory which he declares by his act, not that glory which man ascribes to God when he is united to him. Yet it cannot be otherwise, than that man should be incited to sing forever the high praises of God, when he beholds and enjoys such large and overpowering goodness.

But the observations we have hitherto made on the End of Theology, were accommodated to the manner of that which is legal. We must now consider the End as it is proposed to Evangelical Theology. The End of this is (1.) God and Christ, (2.) the union of man with both of them, and (3.) the sight and fruition of both, to the glory of both Christ and God. On each of these particulars we have some remarks to make from the scriptures, and which most appropriately agree with, and are peculiar to, the Evangelical doctrine.

But before we enter upon these remarks, we must shew that the salvation of man, to the glory of Christ himself, consists also in the love, the sight, and the fruition of Christ. There is a passage in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, which imposes this necessity upon us, because it appears to exclude Christ from this consideration. For in that place the apostle says, "When Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him, that God may be all in all." ([1 Cor. xv. 24.](#)) From this passage three difficulties are raised, which must be removed by an appropriate explanation. They are these: (1.) "If Christ 'shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father,' he will no longer reign himself in person." (2.) "If he 'shall be subject to the Father,' he will no more preside over his Church:" and (3.) "If 'God shall be all in all,' then our salvation is not placed in the union, sight and fruition of him." I will proceed to give a separate answer to each of these objections. The kingdom of Christ embraces two objects: The Mediatorial function of the regal office, and the Regal glory: The royal function, will be laid aside, because there will then be no necessity or use for it, but the royal glory will remain because it was obtained by the acts of the Mediator, and was conferred on him by the Father according to covenant. The same thing is declared by the expression "shall be subject," which here signifies nothing more than the laying aside of the super-eminent power which Christ had received from the Father, and which he had, as the

Father's Vicegerent, administered at the pleasure of his own will: And yet, when he has laid down this power, he will remain, as we shall see, the head and the husband of his Church. That sentence has a similar tendency in which it is said, "God shall be ALL IN ALL." For it takes away even the intermediate and deputed administration of the creatures which God is accustomed to use in the communication of his benefits; and it indicates that God will likewise immediately from himself communicate his own good, even himself to his creatures. Therefore, on the authority of this passage, nothing is taken away from Christ which we have been wishful to attribute to him in this discourse according to the scriptures.

This we will now shew by some plain and apposite passages. Christ promises an union with himself in these words, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." ([John xiv. 23.](#)) Here is a promise of good: therefore the good of the Church is likewise placed in union with Christ; and an abode is promised, not admitting of termination by the bounds of this life, but which will continue for ever, and shall at length, when this short life is ended, be consummated in heaven. In reference to this, the Apostle says, "I desire to depart and to be with Christ;" and Christ himself says, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." ([John xvii. 24.](#)) John says, that the end of his gospel is, "that our fellowship may be with the Father and the Son;" ([1 John i. 3.](#)) in which fellowship eternal life must necessarily consist, since in another place he explains the same end in these words, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ: and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." ([John xx. 31.](#)) But from the meaning of the same Apostle, it appears, that this fellowship has an union antecedent to itself. These are his words, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." ([1 John ii. 24.](#)) What! Shall the union between Christ and his Church cease at a period when he shall place before his glorious sight his spouse sanctified to himself by his own blood? Far be the idea from us! For the union, which had commenced here on earth, will then at length be consummated and perfected.

If any one entertain doubts concerning the vision of Christ, let him listen to Christ in this declaration: "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." ([John xiv. 21.](#)) Will he thus disclose himself in this world only? Let us again hear Christ when he intercedes with the Father for the faithful: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." ([John xvii. 34](#)) Christ, therefore, promises to his followers the sight of his glory, as something salutary to them; and his Father is intreated to grant this favour. The same truth is confirmed by John when he says, "Then we shall see him as he is." ([1 John iii. 2.](#)) This passage may without any impropriety be understood of Christ, and yet not to the exclusion of God the Father. But what do we more distinctly desire than that Christ may become, what it is said

he will be, "the light" that shall enlighten the celestial city, and in whose light "the nations shall walk?" ([Rev. xxi. 23, 24.](#))

Although the fruition of Christ is sufficiently established by the same passages as those by which the sight of him is confirmed, yet we will ratify it by two or three others. Since eternal felicity is called by the name of "the supper of the lamb," and is emphatically described by this term, "the marriage of the Lamb," I think it is taught with adequate clearness in these expressions, that happiness consists in the fruition or enjoyment of the Lamb. But the apostle, in his apocalypse, has ascribed both these epithets to Christ, by saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready : " ([Rev. xix. 7.](#)) and a little afterwards, he says, "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." (verse 9.) It remains for us to treat on the glory of Christ, which is inculcated in these numerous passages of Scripture in which it is stated that "he sits with the Father on his throne," and is adored and glorified both by angels and by men in heaven.

Having finished the proof of those expressions, the truth of which we engaged to demonstrate, we will now proceed to fulfill our promise of explanation, and to show that all and each of these benefits descend to us in a peculiar and more excellent manner, from Evangelical Theology, than they could have done from that which is Legal, if by it we could really have been made alive.

2. And, that we may, in the first place, dispatch the subject of Union, let the brief remarks respecting marriage which we have just made, be brought again to our remembrance. For that word more appropriately honours this union, and adorns it with a double and remarkable privilege; one part of which consists of a deeper combination, the other of a more glorious title. The Scripture speaks thus of the deeper combination; "And the two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church!" ([Ephes. v. 31, 32.](#)) It will therefore be a connubial tie that will unite Christ with the church. The espousals of the church on earth are contracted by the agency of the brides-men of Christ, who are the prophets, the apostles, and their successors, and particularly the Holy Ghost, who is in this affair a mediator and arbitrator. The consummation will then follow, when Christ will introduce his spouse into his bride-chamber. From such an union as this, there arises, not only a communion of blessings, but a previous communion of the persons themselves; from which the possession of blessings is likewise assigned, by a more glorious title, to her who is united in the bonds of marriage. The church comes into a participation not only of the blessings of Christ, but also of his title. For, being the wife of the King, she enjoys it as a right due to her to be called QUEEN; which dignified appellation the scripture does not withhold from her. "Upon thy right hand stands the Queen in gold of Ophir:" ([Psalm xlv. 9.](#)) "There are three-score queens, and four-score concubines, and virgins without number. "My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one

of her that bare her. The daughter saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines; and they praised her." (Song of Sol. vi. 8, 9.) The church could not have been eligible to the high honour of such an union, unless Christ has been made her beloved, her brother, sucking the breasts of the same mother." ([Cant. 8.](#)) But there would have been no necessity for this union, "if righteousness and salvation had come to us by the law." That was, therefore, a happy necessity, which, out of compassion to the emergency of our wretched condition, the divine condescension improved to our benefit, and filled with such a plenitude of dignity! But the manner of this our union with Christ is no small addition to that union which is about to take place between us and God the Father. This will be evident to any one who considers what and how great is the bond of mutual union between Christ and the Father.

3. If we turn our attention to sight or vision, we shall meet with two remarkable characters which are peculiar to Evangelical Theology.

(1.) In the first place, the glory of God, as if accumulated and concentrated together into one body, will be presented to our view in Christ Jesus; which glory would otherwise have been dispersed throughout the most spacious courts of a "heaven immense;" much in the same manner as the light, which had been created on the first day, and equally spread through the whole hemisphere, was on the fourth day collected, united and compacted together into one body, and offered to the eyes as a most conspicuous and shining object. In reference to this, it is said in the Apocalypse, that the heavenly Jerusalem "had no need of the sun, neither of the moon; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb will be the future light thereof," ([Rev. xxi. 23.](#)) as a vehicle by which this most delightful glory may diffuse itself into immensity.

(2.) We shall then not only contemplate, in God himself, the most excellent properties of his nature, but shall also perceive that all of them have been employed in and devoted to the procuring of this good for us, which we now possess in hope, but which we shall in reality then possess by means of this union and open vision.

The excellence, therefore, of this vision far exceeds that which could have been by the law; and from this source arises a fruition of greater abundance and more delicious sweetness. For, as the light in the sun is brighter than that in the stars, so is the sight of the sun, when the human eye is capable of bearing it, more grateful and acceptable, and the enjoyment of it is far more pleasant. From such a view of the Divine attributes, the most delicious sweetness of fruition will seem to be doubled. For the first delight will arise from the contemplation of properties so excellent; the other from the consideration of that immeasurable condescension by which it has pleased God to unfold all those his properties, and the whole of those blessings which he possesses in the exhaustless and immeasurable treasury of his riches, and to give this explanation, that he may procure salvation for man and may impart it to his most miserable creature. This will then be seen in as strong a light, as if the whole of that which is essentially God appeared to exist for the sake of man alone, and for his solo benefit.

There is also the addition of this peculiarity concerning it: "Jesus Christ shall change our vile body, [the body of our humiliation,] that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body: (Phil. iii. 21,) and as we have borne the image of the earthy [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. xv. 49.) Hence it is, that all things are said to be made new in Christ Jesus; (2 Cor. v. 17,) and we are described in the scriptures as "looking, according to his promise, for new heavens and a new earth, (2 Pet. iii. 13,) and a new name written on a white stone, (Rev. ii. 17,) the new name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, (Rev. iii. 12.) and they shall sing a new song to God and his Christ forever." (Rev. v. 9.)

Who does not now see, how greatly the felicity prepared for us by Christ, and offered to us through Evangelical Theology excels that which would have come to us by "the righteousness of the law," if indeed it had been possible for us to fulfill it? We should in that case have been similar to the elect angels; but now we shall be their superiors, if I be permitted to make such a declaration, to the praise of Christ and our God, in this celebrated Hall, and before an assembly among whom we have some of those most blessed spirits themselves as spectators. They now enjoy union with God and Christ, and will probably be more closely united to both of them at the time of the "restitution of all things." But there will be nothing between the two parties similar to that Conjugal Bond which unites us, and in which we may be permitted to glory.

They will behold God himself "face to face," and will contemplate the most eminent properties of his nature; but they will see some among those properties devoted to the purpose of man's salvation, which God has not unfolded for their benefit, because that was not necessary; and which he would not have unfolded, even if it had been necessary. These things they will see, but they will not be moved by envy; it will rather be a subject of admiration and wonder to them, that God, the Creator of both orders, conferred on man, (who was inferior to them in nature,) that dignity which he had of old denied to the spirits that partook with themselves of the same nature. They will behold Christ, that most brilliant and shining light of the city of the living God, of which they also are inhabitants: and, from this very circumstance their happiness will be rendered more illustrious through Christ. Christ "took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham;" (Heb. ii, 16,) to whom also, in that assumed nature, they will present adoration and honour, at the command of God, when he introduces his First begotten into the world to come. Of that future world, and of its blessings, they also will be partakers: but "it is not put in subjection to them," (Heb. ii. 5,) but to Christ and his Brethren, who are partakers of the same nature, and are sanctified by himself. A malignant spirit, yet of the same order as the angels, had hurled against God the crimes of falsehood and envy. But we see how signally God in Christ and in the salvation procured by him, has repelled both these accusations from himself. The falsehood intimated an unwillingness on the part of God that man should be reconciled to him, except by the

intervention of the death of his Son. His envy was excited, because God had raised man, not only to the angelical happiness, (to which even that impure one would have attained had "he kept his first estate,) but to a state of blessedness far superior to that of angels.

That I may not be yet more prolix, I leave it as a subject of reflection to the devoted piety of your private meditations, most accomplished auditors, to estimate the vast and amazing greatness of the glory of God which has here manifested itself, and to calculate the glory due from us to him for such transcendent goodness.

In the mean time, let all of us, however great our number, consider with a devout and attentive mind, what duty is required of us by this doctrine, which having received its manifestation from God and Christ, plainly and fully announces to us such a great salvation, and to the participation of which we are most graciously invited. It requires to be received, understood, believed, and fulfilled, in deed and in reality. It is worthy of all acceptance, on account of its Author; and necessary to be received on account of its End.

1. Being delivered by so great an Author, it is worthy to be received with a humble and submissive mind; to have much diligence and care bestowed on a knowledge and perception of it; and not to be laid aside from the hand, the mind, or the heart, until we shall have "obtained the End of it—THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS." Why should this be done? Shall the Holy God open his mouth, and our ears remain stopped? Shall our Heavenly Master be willing to communicate instruction, and we refuse to learn? Shall he desire to inspire our hearts with the knowledge of his Divine truth, and we, by closing the entrance to our hearts, exclude the most evident and mild breathings of his Spirit? Does Christ, who is the Father's Wisdom, announce to us that gospel which he has brought from the bosom of the Father, and shall we disdain to hide it in the inmost recesses of our heart? And shall we act thus, especially when we have received this binding command of the Father, which says, "Hear ye him!" ([Matt. xvii. 5.](#)) to which he has added a threat, that "if we hear him not, our souls shall be destroyed from among the people; ([Acts iii. 23.](#)) that is, from the commonwealth of Israel? Let none of us fall into the commission of such a heinous offense! "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him," ([Heb. ii. 2, 3.](#))

2. To all the preceding considerations, let the End of this doctrine be added, and it will be of the greatest utility in enforcing this the work of persuasion on minds that are not prodigal of their own proper and Chief Good—an employment in which its potency and excellence are most apparent. Let us reflect, for what cause God has brought us out of darkness into this marvelous light; has furnished us with a mind, understanding, and reason; and has adorned us with his image. Let this question be revolved in our minds, "For what purpose or End has God restored the fallen to their pristine state of integrity, reconciled

sinner to himself, and received enemies into favour," and we shall plainly discover all this to have been done, that we might be made partakers of eternal salvation, and might sing praises to him forever. But we shall not be able to aspire after this End, much less to attain it, except in the way which is pointed out by that Theological Doctrine which has been the topic of our discourse. If we wander from this End, our wanderings from it extend, not only beyond the whole earth and sea, but beyond heaven itself—that city of which nevertheless it is essentially necessary for us to be made free men, and to have our names enrolled among the living. This doctrine is "the gate of heaven," and the door of paradise; the ladder of Jacob, by which Christ descends to us, and we shall in turn ascend to him; and the golden chain, which connects heaven with earth. Let us enter into this gate; let us ascend this ladder; and let us cling to this chain. Ample and wide is the opening of the gate, and it will easily admit believers; the position of the ladder is movable, and will not suffer those who ascend it to be shaken or moved; the joining which unites one link of the chain with another is indissoluble, and will not permit those to fall down who cling to it, until we come to "him that liveth forever and ever," and are raised to the throne of the Most High; till we be united to the living God, and Jesus Christ our Lord, "the Son of the Highest."

But on you, O chosen youths, this care is a duty peculiarly incumbent; for God has destined you to become "workers together with him," in the manifestation of the gospel, and instruments to administer to the salvation of others. Let the Majesty of the Holy Author of your studies, and the necessity of the End, be always placed before your eyes. (1.) On attentively viewing the Author, let the words of the Prophet Amos recur to your remembrance and rest on your mind: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" ([Amos ii. 8.](#)) But you cannot prophesy, unless you be instructed by the Spirit of Prophecy. In our days he addresses no one in that manner, except in the Scriptures; he inspires no one, except by means of the Scriptures, which are divinely inspired. (2.) In contemplating the End, you will discover, that it is not possible to confer on any one, in his intercourse with mankind, an office of greater dignity and utility, or an office that is more salutary in its consequences, than this, by which he may conduct them from error into the way of truth, from wickedness to righteousness, from the deepest misery to the highest felicity; and by which he may contribute much towards their everlasting salvation. But this truth is taught by Theology alone; there is nothing except this heavenly science that prescribes the true righteousness; and by it alone is this felicity disclosed, and our salvation made known and revealed. Let the sacred Scriptures therefore be your models:

"Night and day read them, read them day and night. Colman.

If you thus peruse them, "they will make you that you shall not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; (2 Pet. i. 8,) but you will become good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine; ([1 Tim. iv. 6.](#)) and ready to every good work; ([Tit. iii. 1.](#)) workmen who need not to be ashamed;" ([2 Tim. ii.](#)

15,) sowing the gospel with diligence and patience; and returning to your Lord with rejoicing, bringing with you an ample harvest, through the blessing of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and glory from this time, even forever more! Amen !

ORATION III

THE CERTAINTY OF SACRED THEOLOGY

Although the observations which I have already offered in explanation of the Object, the Author and the End of sacred Theology, and other remarks which might have been made, if they had fallen into the hands of a competent interpreter, although all of them contain admirable commendations of this Theology, and convince us that it is altogether divine, since it is occupied concerning God, is derived from God, and leads to God; yet they will not be able to excite within the mind of any person a sincere desire of entering upon such a study, unless he be at the same time encouraged by the bright rays of an assured hope of arriving at a knowledge of the desirable Object, and of obtaining the blessed End. For since the perfection of motion is rest, vain and useless will that motion be which is not able to attain rest, the limit of its perfection. But no prudent person will desire to subject himself to vain and useless labour. All our hope, then, of attaining to this knowledge is placed in Divine revelation. For the anticipation of this very just conception has engaged the minds of men, "that God cannot be known except through himself, to whom also there can be no approach but through himself." On this account it becomes necessary to make it evident to man, that a revelation has been made by God; that the revelation which has been given is fortified and defended by such sure and approved arguments, as will cause it to be considered and acknowledged as divine; and that there is a method, by which a man may understand the meanings declared in the word, and may apprehend them by a firm and assured faith. To the elucidation of the last proposition, this third part of our labour must be devoted. God grant that I may in this discourse again follow the guidance of his word as it is revealed in the scriptures, and may bring forth and offer to your notice such things as may contribute to establish our faith, and to promote the glory of God, to the uniting together of all of us in the Lord. I pray and beseech you also, my very famous and most accomplished hearers, not to disdain to favour me with a benevolent and patient hearing, while I deliver this feeble oration in your presence.

As we are now entering upon a consideration of the Certainty of Sacred Theology, it is not necessary that we should contemplate it under the aspect of Legal and Evangelical; for in both of them there is the same measure of the truth, and therefore, the same measure of knowledge, and that is certainty. We will treat on this subject, then, in a general manner, without any particular reference or application.

But that our oration may proceed in an orderly course, it will be requisite in the first place briefly to describe Certainty in general; and then to treat at greater length on the Certainty Of Theology.

I. Certainty, then, is a property of the mind or understanding, and a mode of knowledge according to which the mind knows an object as it is, and is certain that it knows that object

as it is. It is distinct from Opinion; because it is possible for opinion to know a matter as it is, but its knowledge is accompanied by a suspicion of the opposite falsity. Two things, therefore, are required, to constitute certainty. (1.) The truth of the thing itself, and (2.) such an apprehension of it in our minds as we have just described. This very apprehension, considered as being formed from the truth of the thing itself, and fashioned according to such truth, is also called Truth on account of the similitude; even as the thing itself is certain, on account of the action of the mind which apprehends it in that manner. Thus do those two things, (certainty and truth,) because of their admirable union, make a mutual transfer of their names, the one to the other.

But truth may in reality be viewed in two aspects—one simple, and the other compound. (1.) The former, in relation to a thing as being in the number of entities; (2.) the latter, in reference to something inhering in a thing, being present with it or one of its circumstances—or in reference to a thing as producing something else, or as being

produced by some other—and if there be any other affections and relations of things among themselves. The process of truth in the mind is after the same manner. Its action is of two kinds. (1.) On a simple being or entity which is called "a simple apprehension;" and (2.) on a complex being, which is termed composition." The mode of truth is likewise, in reality, two-fold—necessary and contingent; according to which, a thing, whether it be simple or complex, is called "necessary" or "contingent." The necessity of a simple thing is the necessary existence of the thing itself, whether it obtain the place of a subject or that of an attribute. The necessity of a complex thing is the unavoidable and essential disposition and habitude that subsists between the subject and the attribute.

That necessity which, as we have just stated, is to be considered in simple things, exists in nothing except in God and in those things which, although they agree with him in their nature, are yet distinguished from him by our mode of considering them. All other things, whatever may be their qualities, are contingent, from the circumstance of their being brought into action by power; neither are they contingent only by reason of their beginning, but also of their continued duration. Thus the existence of God, is a matter of necessity; his life, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, will and power, likewise have a necessary existence. But the existence and preservation of the creatures are not of necessity. Thus also creation, preservation, government, and whatever other acts are attributed to God in respect of his creatures, are not of necessity. The foundation of necessity is the nature of God; the principle of contingency is the free will of the Deity. The more durable it has pleased God to create anything, the nearer is its approach to necessity, and the farther it recedes from contingency; although it never pass beyond the boundaries of contingency, and never reach the inaccessible abode of necessity.

Complex necessity exists not only in God, but also in the things of his creation. It exists in God, partly on account of the foundation of his nature, and partly on account of the

principle of his free-will. But its existence in the creatures is only from the free will of God, who at once resolved that this should be the relation and habitude between two created objects. Thus "God lives, understands, and loves," is a necessary truth from his very nature as God. "God is the Creator," "Jesus Christ is the saviour," "An angel is a created spirit endowed with intelligence and will," and "A man is a rational creature," are all necessary truths from the free will of God.

From this statement it appears, that degrees may be constituted in the necessity of a complex truth; that the highest may be attributed to that truth which rests upon the nature of God as its foundation; that the rest, which proceed from the will of God, may be excelled by that which (by means of a greater affection of his will,) God has willed to invest with such right of precedence; and that it may be followed by that which God has willed by a less affection of his will. The motion of the sun is necessary from the very nature of that luminary; but it is more necessary that the children of Israel be preserved and avenged on their enemies; the sun is therefore commanded to stand still in the midst of the heavens. ([Josh. x. 13.](#)) It is necessary that the sun be borne along from the east to the west, by the diurnal motion of the heavens. But it is more necessary that Hezekiah receive, by a sure sign, a confirmation of the prolongation of his life; the sun, therefore, when commanded, returns ten degrees backward; ([Isa. xxxviii. 8.](#)) and thus it is proper, that the less necessity should yield to the greater, and that from the free will of God, which has imposed a law on both of them. As this kind of necessity actually exists in things, the mind, by observing the same gradations, apprehends and knows it, if such a mode of cognition can truly deserve the name of "knowledge."

But the causes of this Certainty are three. For it is produced on the mind, either by the senses, by reasoning and discourse, or by revelation. The first is called the certainty of experience; the second, that of knowledge; and the last, that of faith. The first is the certainty of particular objects which come within the range and under the observation of the senses; the second is that of general conclusions deduced from known principles; and the last is that of things remote from the cognizance both of the senses and reason.

II. Let these observations now be applied to our present purpose. The Object of our Theology is God, and Christ in reference to his being God and Man. God is a true Being, and the only necessary one, on account of the necessity of his and he is also a necessary Being, because he will endure to all eternity. The things which are attributed to God in our Theology: partly belong to his nature, and partly agree with it by his own free will. By his nature, life, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, will and power belong to him, by a natural and absolute necessity. By his free will, all his volitions and actions concerning the creatures agree with his nature, and that immutably; because he willed at the same time, that they should not be retracted or repealed. All those things which are attributed to Christ, belong to him by the free will of God, but on this condition, that "Christ be the same yesterday, and to-day, and

forever," (*Heb. xiii. 8.*) entirely exempt from any future change, whether it be that of a subject or its attributes, or of the affection which exists between the two. All other things, which are found in the whole superior and inferior nature of things, (whether they be considered simply in themselves, or as they are mutually affected among themselves,) do not extend to any degree of this necessity. The truth and necessity of our Theology, therefore, far exceed the necessity of all other sciences, in as much as both these [the truth and necessity,] are situated in the things themselves. The certainty of the mind, while it is engaged in the act of apprehending and knowing things, cannot exceed the Truth and Necessity of the thing's themselves; on the contrary, it very often may not reach them, [the truth and necessity,] through some defect in its capacity. For the eyes of our mind are in the same condition with respect to the pure truth of things, as are the eyes of owls with respect to the light of the sun. On this account, therefore, it is of necessity, that the object of no science can be known with greater certainty than that of Theology; but it follows rather, that a knowledge of this object may be obtained with the greatest degree of certainty, if it be presented in a qualified and proper manner to the inspection of the understanding according to its capacity. For this object is not of such a nature and condition as to be presented to the external senses; nor can its attributes, properties, affections, actions and passions be known by means of the observation and experience of the external senses. It is too sublime for them; and the attributes, properties, affections, actions and passions, which agree with it, are so high that the mind, even when assisted by reason and discourse, can neither know it, investigate its attributes, nor demonstrate that they agree with the subject, whatever the principles may be which it has applied, and to whatever causes it may have had recourse, whether they be such as arise from the object itself, from its attributes, or from the agreement which subsists between them. The Object is known to itself alone; and the whole truth and necessity are properly and immediately known to Him to whom they belong; to God in the first place and in an adequate degree; to Christ, in the second place, through the communication of God. To itself, in an adequate manner, in reference to the knowledge which it has of itself; in an inferior degree to God, in reference to his knowledge of him, [Christ.] Revelation is therefore necessary by which God may exhibit himself and his Christ as an object of sight and knowledge to our understanding; and this exhibition to be made in such a manner as to unfold at once all their attributes, properties, affections, actions and passions, as far as it is permitted for them to be known, concerning God and his Christ, to our salvation and to their glory; and that God may thus disclose all and every portion of those theorems in which both the subjects themselves and all their attending attributes are comprehended. Revelation is necessary, if it be true that God and his Christ ought to be known, and both of them be worthy to receive Divine honours and worship. But both of them ought to be known and worshipped; the revelation, therefore, of both of them is necessary; and because it is thus necessary, it has been made by God. For if nature, as a partaker and communicator of a good that is only

partial, is not deficient in the things that are necessary; how much less ought we even to suspect such a deficiency in God, the Author and Artificer of nature, who is also the Chief Good?

But to inspect this subject a little more deeply and particularly, will amply repay our trouble; for it is similar to the foundation on which must rest the weight of the structure—the other doctrines which follow. For unless it should appear certain and evident, that a revelation has been made, it will be in vain to inquire and dispute about the word in which that revelation has been made and is contained. In the first place, then, the very nature of God most clearly evinces that a revelation has been made of himself and Christ. His nature is good, beneficent, and communicative of his blessedness, whether it be that which proceeds from it by creation, or that which is God himself. But there is no communication made of Divine good, unless God be made known to the understanding, and be desired by the affections and the will. But he cannot become an object of knowledge except by revelation. A revelation, therefore, is made, as a necessary instrument of communication.

2. The necessity of this revelation may in various ways be inferred and taught from the nature and condition of man. First. By nature, man possesses a mind and understanding. But it is just that the mind and understanding should be turned towards their Creator; this, however, cannot be done without a knowledge of the Creator, and such knowledge cannot be obtained except by revelation; a revelation has, therefore, been made. Secondly. God himself formed the nature of man capable of Divine Good. But in vain would it have had such a capacity, if it might not at some time partake of this Divine Good; but of this the nature of man cannot be made a partaker except by the knowledge of it; the knowledge of this Divine Good has therefore been manifested. Thirdly. It is not possible, that the desire which God has implanted within man should be vain and fruitless. That desire is for the enjoyment of an Infinite Good, which is God; but that Infinite Good cannot be enjoyed, except it be known; a revelation, therefore, has been made, by which it may be known.

3. Let that relation be brought forward which subsists between God and man, and the revelation that has been made will immediately become manifest. God, the Creator of man, has deserved it as his due, to receive worship and honour from the workmanship of his hands, on account of the benefit which he conferred by the act of creation. Religion and piety are due to God, from man his creature; and this obligation is coeval with the very birth of man, as the bond which contains this requisition was given on the very day in which he was created. But religion could not be a human invention. For it is the will of God to receive worship according to the rule and appointment of his own will. A revelation was therefore made, which exacts from man the religion due to God, and prescribes that worship which is in accordance with his pleasure and his honour.

4. If we turn our attention towards Christ, it is amazing how great the necessity of a manifestation appears, and how many arguments immediately present themselves in behalf

of a revelation being communicated. Wisdom wishes to be acknowledged as the deviser of the wonderful attempering and qualifying of justice and mercy. Goodness and gracious mercy, as the administrators of such an immense benefit sought to be worshipped and honoured. And power, as the hand-maid of such stupendous wisdom and goodness, and as the executrix of the decree made by both of them, deserved to receive adoration. But the different acts of service which were due to each of them, could not be rendered to them without revelation. The wisdom, mercy and power of God, have, therefore, been revealed and displayed most copiously in Christ Jesus. He performed a multitude of most wonderful works, by which we might obtain the salvation that we had lost; he endured most horrid torments and inexpressible distress, which, when pleaded in our favour, served to obtain this salvation for us; and by the gift of the Father he was possessed of an abundance of graces, and, at the Divine command, he became the distributor of them. Having, therefore, sustained all these offices for us, it is his pleasure to receive those acknowledgments, and those acts of Divine honour and worship, which are due to him on account of his extraordinary merits. But in vain will he expect the performance of these acts from man, unless he be himself revealed. A revelation of Christ has, therefore, been made. Consult actual experience, and that will supply you with numberless instances of this manifestation. The devil himself, who is the rival of Christ, has imitated these instances of gracious manifestation, has held converse with men under the name and semblance of the true God, has demanded acts of devotion from them, and prescribed to them a mode of religious worship. We have, therefore, the truth and the necessity of our Theology agreeing together in the highest degree; we have an adequate notion of it in the mind of God and Christ, according to the word which is called *emfuto* "engrafted." ([James i. 21.](#)) We have a revelation of this Theology made to men by the word preached; which revelation agrees both with the things themselves and with the notion which we have mentioned, but in a way that is attempered and suited to the human capacity. And as all these are preliminaries to the certainty which we entertain concerning this Theology, it was necessary to notice them in these introductory remarks.

Let us now consider this Certainty itself. But since a revelation has been made in the word which has been published, and since the whole of it is contained in that word, (so that This Word is itself our Theology,) we can determine nothing concerning the certainty of Theology in any other way than by offering some explanation concerning our certain apprehension of that word. We will assume it as a fact which is allowed and confirmed, that this word is to be found in no other place than in the sacred books of the Old and New Testament; and we shall on this account confine this certain apprehension of our mind to that word. But in fulfilling this design, three things demand our attentive consideration: First. The Certainty, and the kind of certainty which God requires from us, and by which it is his pleasure that this word should be received and apprehended by us as the Chief Certainty. Secondly. The reasons and arguments by which the truth of that word, which is its divinity,

may be proved. Thirdly. How a persuasion of that divinity may be wrought in our minds, and this Certainty may be impressed on our hearts.

I. The Certainty "with which God wishes this word to be received, is that of faith; and it therefore depends on the veracity of him who utters it." By this Certainty "it is received," not only as true, but as divine; and it is not of that involved and mixed kind "of faith" by which any one, without understanding the meanings expressed by the word as by a sign, believes that those books which are contained in the Bible, are divine: for not only is a doubtful opinion opposed to faith, but an obscure and perplexed conception is equally inimical. Neither is it that species "of historical faith" which believes the word to be divine that it comprehends only by a theoretical understanding. But God demands that faith to be given to his word, by which the meanings expressed in this word may be understood, as far as it is necessary for the salvation of men and the glory of God; and may be so assuredly known to be divine, that they may be believed to embrace not only the Chief Truth, but also the Chief Good of man. This faith not only believes that God and Christ exist, it not only gives credence to them when they make declarations of any kind, but it believes in God and Christ when they affirm such things concerning themselves, as, being apprehended by faith, create a belief in God as our Father, and in Christ as our saviour. This we consider to be the office of an understanding that is not merely theoretical, but of one that is practical. For this cause not only is *asfaleia* (certainty,) attributed in the Scriptures to true and living faith, but to it are likewise ascribed both *wlhroforia* (a full assurance, [Heb. vi. 2.](#)) and *wewoiqhsiv* (trust or confidence, [2 Cor. iii. 4.](#)) and it is God who requires and demands such a species of certainty and of faith.

II. We may now be permitted to proceed by degrees from this point, to a consideration of those arguments which prove to us the divinity of the word; and to the manner in which the required certainty and faith are produced in our minds. To constitute natural vision we know that, (beside an object capable of being seen,) not only is an external light necessary to shine upon it and to render it visible, but an internal strength of eye is also required, which may receive within itself the form and appearance of the object which has been illuminated by the external light, and may thus be enabled actually to behold it. The same accompaniments are necessary to constitute spiritual vision; for, beside this external light of arguments and reasoning, an internal light of the mind and soul is necessary to perfect this vision of faith. But infinite is the number of arguments on which this world builds and establishes its divinity. We will select and briefly notice a few of those which are more usual, lest by too great a prolixity we become too troublesome and disagreeable to our auditory.

1. THE DIVINITY OF SCRIPTURE

Let scripture itself come forward, and perform the chief part in asserting its own Divinity. Let us inspect its substance and its matter. It is all concerning God and his Christ, and is occupied in declaring the nature of both of them, in further explaining the love, the benevolence, and the benefits which have been conferred by both of them on the human race, or which have yet to be conferred; and prescribing, in return, the duties of men towards their Divine Benefactors. The scripture, therefore, is divine in its object.

(2.) But how is it occupied in treating on these subjects? It explains the nature of God in such a way as to attribute nothing extraneous to it, and nothing that does not perfectly agree with it. It describes the person of Christ in such a manner, that the human mind, on beholding the description, ought to acknowledge, that "such a person could not have been invented or devised by any created intellect," and that it is described with such aptitude, suitableness and sublimity, as far to exceed the largest capacity of a created understanding. In the same manner the scripture is employed in relating the love of God and Christ towards us, and in giving an account of the benefits which we receive. Thus the Apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Ephesians on these subjects, says, that from his former writings, the extent of "his knowledge of the mystery of Christ" might be manifest to them; ([Ephes. iii. 4.](#)) that is, it was divine, and derived solely from the revelation of God. Let us contemplate the law in which is comprehended the duty of men towards God. What shall we find, in all the laws of every nation, that is at all similar to this, or (omitting all mention of "equality,") that may be placed in comparison with those ten short sentences? Yet even those commandments, most brief and comprehensive as they are, have been still further reduced to two chief heads—the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. This law appears in reality to have been sketched and written by the right hand of God. That this was actually the case, Moses shews in these words, What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" ([Deut. iv. 8.](#)) Moses likewise says, that so great and manifest is the divinity which is inherent in this law, that it compelled the heathen nations, after they had heard it, to declare in ecstatic admiration of it. "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people?" ([Deut. iv. 6.](#)) The scripture, therefore, is completely divine, from the manner in which it treats on those matters which are its subjects.

(3.) If we consider the End, it will as clearly point out to us the divinity of this doctrine. That End is entirely divine, being nothing less than the glory of God and man's eternal salvation. What can be more equitable than that all things should be referred to him from whom they have derived their origin? What can be more consonant to the wisdom, goodness, and power of God, than that he should restore, to his original integrity, man who had been created by him, but who had by his own fault destroyed himself; and that he should make him a partaker of his own Divine blessedness? If by means of any word God had wished to manifest himself to man, what end of manifestation ought he to have proposed that would

have been more honourable to himself and more salutary to man? That the word, therefore, was divinely revealed, could not be discerned by any mark which was better or more legible, than that of its showing to man the way of salvation, taking him as by the hand and leading him into that way, and not ceasing to accompany him until it introduced him to the full enjoyment of salvation: In such a consummation as this, the glory of God most abundantly shines forth and displays itself. He who may wish to contemplate what we are declaring concerning this End, in a small but noble part of this word, should place "the Lord's Prayer" before the eyes of his mind; he should look most intently upon it; and, as far as that is possible for human eyes, he should thoroughly investigate all its parts and beauties. After he has done this, unless he confess, that in it this double end is proposed in a manner that is at once so nervous, brief, and accurate, as to be above the strength and capacity of every created intelligence, and unless he acknowledge, that this form of prayer is purely divine, he must of necessity have a mind surrounded and enclosed by more than Egyptian darkness.

2. THE AGREEMENT OF THIS DOCTRINE IN ITS PARTS

Let us compare the parts of this doctrine together, and we shall discover in all of them an agreement and harmony, even in points the most minute, that it is so great and evident as to cause us to believe that it could not be manifested by men, but ought to have implicit credence placed in it as having certainly proceeded from God.

Let the Predictions alone, that have been promulgated concerning Christ in different ages, be compared together. For the consolation of the first parents of our race, God said to the serpent, "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." ([Gen. iii. 15.](#)) The same promise was repeated by God, and was specially made to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations be blessed." ([Gen. xxii. 18.](#)) The patriarch Jacob, when at the point of death, foretold that this seed should come forth from the lineage and family of Judah, in these words: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." ([Gen. xlix. 10.](#)) Let the alien prophet also be brought forward, and to these predictions he will add that oracular declaration which he pronounced by the inspiration and at the command of the God of Israel, in these words: Balaam said, "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." ([Num. xxiv. 17.](#)) This blessed seed was afterwards promised to David, by Nathan, in these words: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." ([2 Sam. vii. 12.](#)) On this account Isaiah says, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." ([xi. 1.](#)) And, by way of intimating that a virgin would be his mother, the same prophet says, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel!" ([Isa. vii. 14.](#)) It would be tedious to repeat every declaration that occurs in the psalms and in the other Prophets, and that agrees most appropriately with this subject. When these prophecies are compared with those occurrences that have been described in the New Testament concerning their fulfillment, it will be evident from the complete harmony of the whole, that they were all spoken and written by the impulse of one Divine Spirit. If some things in those sacred books seem to be contradictions, they are easily reconciled by means of a right interpretation. I add, that not only do all the parts of this doctrine agree among themselves, but they also harmonize with that Universal Truth which has been spread through the whole of Philosophy; so that nothing can be discovered in Philosophy, which does not correspond with this doctrine. If any thing appear not to possess such an exact correspondence, it may be clearly confuted by means of true Philosophy and right reason.

Let the Style and Character of the scriptures be produced, and, in that instant, a most brilliant and refulgent mirror of the majesty which is luminously reflected in it, will display itself to our view in a manner the most divine. It relates things that are placed at a great distance beyond the range of the human imagination—things which far surpass the capacities

of men. And it simply relates these things without employing any mode of argumentation, or the usual apparatus of persuasion: yet its obvious wish is to be understood and believed. But what confidence or reason has it for expecting to obtain the realization of this its desire? It possesses none at all, except that it depends purely upon its own unmixed authority, which is divine. It publishes its commands and its interdicts, its enactments and its prohibitions to all persons alike; to kings and subjects, to nobles and plebians, to the learned and the ignorant, to those that "require a sign" and those that "seek after wisdom," to the old and the young; over all these, the rule which it bears, and the power which it exercises, are equal. It places its sole reliance, therefore, on its own potency, which is able in a manner the most efficacious to restrain and compel all those who are refractory, and to reward those who are obedient.

Let the Rewards and Punishments be examined, by which the precepts are sanctioned, and there are seen both a promise of life eternal and a denunciation of eternal punishments. He who makes such a commencement as this, may calculate upon his becoming an object of ridicule, except he possess an inward consciousness both of his own right and power; and except he know, that, to subdue the wills of mortals, is a matter equally easy of accomplishment with him, as to execute his menaces and to fulfill his premises. To the scriptures themselves let him have recourse who may be desirous to prove with the greatest certainty its majesty, from the kind of diction which it adopts: Let him read the charming swan-like Song of Moses described in the concluding chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy: Let him with his mental eyes diligently survey the beginning of Isaiah's prophecy: Let him in a devout spirit consider the hundred and fourth Psalm. Then, with these, let him compare whatever choice specimens of poetry and eloquence the Greeks and the Romans can produce in the most eminent manner from their archives; and he will be convinced by the most demonstrative evidence, that the latter are productions of the human spirit, and that the former could proceed from none other than the Divine Spirit. Let a man of the greatest genius, and, in erudition, experience, and eloquence, the most accomplished of his race—let such a well instructed mortal enter the lists and attempt to finish a composition at all similar to these writings, and he will find himself at a loss and utterly disconcerted, and his attempt will terminate in discomfiture. That man will then confess, that what St. Paul declared concerning his own manner of speech, and that of his fellow-labourers, may be truly applied to the whole scripture: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor. ii. 13.)

3. THE PROPHECIES

Let us next inspect the prophecies scattered through the whole body of the doctrine; some of which belong to the substance of the doctrine, and others contribute towards procuring authority to the doctrine and to its instruments. It should be particularly observed, with what eloquence and distinctness they foretell the greatest and most important matters, which are far removed from the scrutinizing research of every human and angelical mind, and which could not possibly be performed except by power Divine: Let it be noticed at the same time with what precision the predictions are answered by the periods that intervene between them, and by all their concomitant circumstances; and the whole world will be compelled to confess, that such things could not have been foreseen and foretold, except by an omniscient Deity. I need not here adduce examples; for they are obvious to any one that opens the Divine volume. I will produce one or two passages, only, in which this precise agreement of the prediction and its fulfillment is described. When speaking of the children of Israel under the Egyptian bondage, and their deliverance from it according to the prediction which God had communicated to Abraham in a dream, Moses says, "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt:" ([Exod. xii. 41.](#)) Ezra speaks thus concerning the liberation from the Babylonish captivity, which event, Jeremiah foretold, should occur within seventy years: "Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia," &c. ([Ezra i. 1.](#)) But God himself declares by Isaiah, that the divinity of the scripture may be proved, and ought to be concluded, from this kind of prophecies. These are his words: "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods." ([Isa. xli. 23.](#))

4. MIRACLES

An illustrious evidence of the same divinity is afforded in the miracles, which God has performed by the stewards of his word, his prophets and apostles, and by Christ himself, for the confirmation of his doctrine and for the establishment of their authority. For these miracles are of such a description as infinitely to exceed the united powers of all the creatures and all the powers of nature itself, when their energies are combined. But the God of truth, burning with zeal for his own glory, could never have afforded such strong testimonies as these to false prophets and their false doctrine: nor could he have borne such witness to any doctrine even when it was true, provided it was not his, that is, provided it was not divine. Christ, therefore, said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works." ([John x. 37, 38.](#)) It was the same cause also, which induced the widow of Sarepta to say, on receiving from the hands of Elijah her son, who, after his death, had been raised to life by the prophet: "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." ([1 Kings xvii. 24.](#)) That expression of Nicodemus has the same bearing: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." ([John iii. 2.](#)) And it was for a similar reason that the apostle said, "The signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." ([2 Cor. xii. 12.](#)) There are indeed miracles on record that were wrought among the gentiles, and under the auspices of the gods whom they invoked: It is also predicted, concerning False Prophets, and Antichrist himself, that they will exhibit many signs and wonders: ([Rev. xix. 20.](#)) But neither in number, nor in magnitude, are they equal to those which the true God has wrought before all Israel, and in the view of the whole world. Neither were those feats of their real miracles, but only astonishing operations performed by the agency and power of Satan and his instruments, by means of natural causes, which are concealed from the human understanding, and escape the cognizance of men. But to deny the existence of those great and admirable miracles which are related to have really happened, when they have also the testimony of both Jews and gentiles, who were the enemies of the true doctrine—is an evident token of bare-faced impudence and execrable stupidity.

5. THE ANTIQUITY OF THE DOCTRINE

Let the antiquity, the propagation, the preservation, and the truly admirable defense of this doctrine be added—and they will afford a bright and perspicuous testimony of its divinity. If that which is of the highest antiquity possesses the greatest portion of truth," as Tertullian most wisely and justly observes, then this doctrine is one of the greatest truth, because it can trace its origin to the highest antiquity. It is likewise Divine, because it was manifested at a time when it could not have been devised by any other mind; for it had its commencement at the very period when man was brought into existence. An apostate angel would not then have proposed any of his doctrines to man, unless God had previously revealed himself to the intelligent creature whom he had recently formed: That is, God hindered the fallen angel, and there was then no cause in existence by which he might be impelled to engage in such an enterprise. For God would not suffer man, who had been created after his own image, to be tempted by his enemy by means of false doctrine, until, after being abundantly instructed in that which was true, he was enabled to know that which was false and to reject it. Neither could any odious feeling of envy against man have tormented Satan, except God had considered him worthy of the communication of his word, and had deigned, through that communication, to make him a partaker of eternal felicity, from which Satan had at that period unhappily fallen.

The Propagation, Preservation, and Defense of this doctrine, most admirable when separately considered, will all be found divine, if, in the first place, we attentively fix our eyes upon those men among whom it is propagated; then on the foes and adversaries of this doctrine; and, lastly, on the manner in which its propagation, preservation and defense have hitherto been and still are conducted. (1.) If we consider those men among whom this sacred doctrine flourishes, we shall discover that their nature, on account of its corruption, rejects this doctrine for a two-fold reason; (i.) The first is, because in one of its parts it is so entirely contrary to human and worldly wisdom, as to subject itself to the accusation of Folly from men of corrupt minds. (ii.) The second reason is, because in another of its parts it is decidedly hostile and inimical to worldly lusts and carnal desires. It is, therefore, rejected by the human understanding and refused by the will, which are the two chief faculties in man; for it is according to their orders and commands that the other faculties are either put in motion or remain at rest. Yet, notwithstanding all this natural repugnance, it has been received and believed. The human mind, therefore, has been conquered, and the subdued will has been gained, by Him who is the author of both. (2.)

This doctrine has some most powerful and bitter enemies: Satan, the prince of this world, with all his angels, and the world his ally: These are foes with whom there can be no reconciliation. If the subtlety, the power, the malice, the audacity, the impudence, the perseverance, and the diligence of these enemies, be placed in opposition to the simplicity, the inexperience, the weakness, the fear, the inconstancy, and the slothfulness of the greater

part of those who give their assent to this heavenly doctrine; then will the greatest wonder be excited, how this doctrine, when attacked by so many enemies, and defended by such sorry champions, can stand and remain safe and unmoved. If this wonder and admiration be succeeded by a supernatural and divine investigation of its cause, then will God himself be discovered as the propagator, preserver, and defender of this doctrine. (3.) The manner also in which its propagation, preservation and defense are conducted, indicates divinity by many irrefragible tokens. This doctrine is carried into effect, without bow or sword—without horses chariots, or horsemen; yet it proceeds prosperously along, stands in an erect posture, and remains unconquered, in the name of the Lord of Hosts: While its adversaries, though supported by such apparently able auxiliaries and relying on such powerful aid, are overthrown, fall down together, and perish. It is accomplished, not by holding out alluring promises of riches, glory, and earthly pleasures, but by a previous statement of the dreaded cross, and by the prescription of such patience and forbearance as far exceed all human strength and ability. "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will shew him How Great Things he must suffer for my name's sake." ([Acts ix. 15, 16.](#)) "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." ([Matt. x. 16](#))

Its completion is not effected by the counsels of men, but in opposition to all human counsels—whether they be those of the professors of this doctrine, or those of its adversaries. For it often happens, that the counsels and machinations which have been devised for the destruction of this doctrine, contribute greatly towards its propagation, while the princes of darkness fret and vex themselves in vain, and are astonished and confounded, at an issue so contrary to the expectations which they had formed from their most crafty and subtle counsels.

St. Luke says, "Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word." ([Acts vii. 3, 4.](#)) And by this means Samaria received the word of God. In reference to this subject St. Paul also says, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." ([Phil. i. 12, 13.](#)) For the same cause that common observation has acquired all its just celebrity: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." What shall we say to these things? "The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner: This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." ([Psalm cxviii. 22, 23.](#))

Subjoin to these the tremendous judgments of God on the persecutors of this doctrine, and the miserable death of the tyrants. One of these, at the very moment when he was breathing out his polluted and unhappy spirit, was inwardly constrained publicly to proclaim,

though in a frantic and outrageous tone, the divinity of this doctrine in these remarkable words: "Thou Hast Conquered, O Galilean!"

Who is there, now, that, with eyes freed from all prejudice, will look upon such clear proofs of the divinity of Scripture, and that will not instantly confess: the Apostle Paul had the best reasons for exclaiming, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4) As if he had said, "This is not human darkness; neither is it drawn as a thick veil over the mind by man himself; but it is diabolical darkness, and spread by the devil, the prince of darkness, upon the mind of man, over whom, by the just judgment of God, he exercises at his pleasure the most absolute tyranny. If this were not the case, it would be impossible for this darkness to remain; but, how great soever its density might be, it would be dispersed by this light which shines with such overpowering brilliancy."

6. THE SANCTITY OF THOSE BY WHOM IT HAS BEEN ADMINISTERED

The sanctity of those by whom the word was first announced to men and by whom it was committed to writing, conduces to the same purpose—to prove its Divinity. For since it appears that those who were entrusted with the discharge of this duty, had divested themselves of the wisdom of the world, and of the feelings and affections of the flesh, entirely putting off the old man—and that they were completely eaten up and consumed by their zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men—it is manifest that such great sanctity as this had been inspired and infused into them, by Him alone who is the Holiest of the holy.

Let Moses be the first that is introduced: He was treated in a very injurious manner by a most ungrateful people, and was frequently marked out for destruction; yet was he prepared to purchase their salvation by his own banishment. He said, when pleading with God, "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." ([Exod. xxxii. 32.](#)) Behold his zeal for the salvation of the people entrusted to his charge—a zeal for the glory of God! Would you see another reason for this wish to be devoted to destruction? Read what he had previously said: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say? For mischief did the Lord bring them out to slay them in the mountains," ([Exod. xxxii. 12.](#)) "because he was not able to bring them out unto the land which he swear unto their Fathers." ([Num. xiv. 16.](#)) We observe the same zeal in Paul, when he wishes that himself "were accursed from Christ for his brethren the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh," ([Rom. 9](#)) from whom he had suffered many and great indignities.

David was not ashamed publicly to confess his heavy and enormous crimes, and to commit them to writing as an eternal memorial to posterity. Samuel did not shrink from marking in the records of perpetuity the detestable conduct of his sons; and Moses did not hesitate to bear a public testimony against the iniquity and the madness of his ancestors. If even the least desire of a little glory had possessed their minds, they might certainly have been able to indulge in taciturnity, and to conceal in silence these circumstances of disgrace. Those of them who were engaged in describing the deeds and achievements of other people, were unacquainted with the art of offering adulation to great men and nobles, and of wrongfully attributing to their enemies any unworthy deed or motive. With a regard to truth alone, in promoting the glory of God, they placed all persons on an equality; and made no other distinction between them than that which God himself has commanded to be made between piety and wickedness. On receiving from the hand of God their appointment to this office, they at once and altogether bade farewell to all the world, and to all the desires which are in it. "Each of them said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren; for they observed the word of God, and kept his covenant." ([Deut. xxxiii. 9.](#))

7. THE CONSTANCY OF ITS PROFESSORS AND MARTYRS

But what shall we say respecting the constancy of the professors and martyrs, which they displayed in the torments that they endured for the truth of this doctrine? Indeed, if we subject this constancy to the view of the most inflexible enemies of the doctrine, we shall extort from unwilling judges a confession of its Divinity. But, that the strength of this argument may be placed in a clearer light, the mind must be directed to four particulars: the multitude of the martyrs, and their condition; the torments which their enemies inflicted on them, and the patience which they evinced in enduring them.

(1.) If we direct our inquiries to the multitude of them, it is innumerable, far exceeding thousands of thousands; on this account it is out of the power of any one to say, that, because it was the choice of but a few persons, it ought to be imputed to frenzy or to weariness of a life that was full of trouble.

(2.) If we inquire into their condition, we shall find nobles and peasants, those in authority and their subjects, the learned and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, the old and the young; persons of both sexes, men and women, the married and the unmarried, men of a hardy constitution and inured to dangers, and girls of tender habits who had been delicately educated, and whose feet had scarcely ever before stumbled against the smallest pebble that arose above the surface of their smooth and level path. Many of the early martyrs were honourable persons of this description, that no one might think them to be inflamed by a desire of glory, or endeavouring to gain applause by the perseverance and magnanimity that they had evinced in the maintenance of the sentiments which they had embraced.

(3.) Some of the torments inflicted on such a multitude of persons and of such various circumstances in life, were of a common sort, and others unusual, some of them quick in their operation and others of them slow. Part of the unoffending victims were nailed to crosses and part of them were decapitated; some were drowned in rivers, whilst others were roasted before a slow fire. Several were ground to powder by the teeth of wild beasts, or were torn in pieces by their fangs; many were sawn asunder, while others were stoned; and not a few of them were subjected to punishments which cannot be expressed, but which are accounted most disgraceful and infamous, on account of their extreme turpitude and indelicacy. No species of savage cruelty was omitted which either the ingenuity of human malignity could invent, which rage the most conspicuous and furious could excite, or which even the infernal laboratory of the court of hell could supply.

(4.) And yet, that we may come at once to the patience of these holy confessors, they bore all these tortures with constancy and equanimity; nay, they endured them with such a glad heart and cheerful countenance, as to fatigue even the restless fury of their persecutors, which has often been compelled, when wearied out, to yield to the unconquerable strength of their patience, and to confess itself completely vanquished. And what was the cause of all this endurance? It consisted in their unwillingness to recede in the least point from that

religion, the denial of which was the only circumstance that might enable them to escape danger, and, in many instances, to acquire glory. What then was the reason of the great patience which they shewed under their acute sufferings? It was because they believed, that when this short life was ended, and after the pains and distresses which they were called to endure on earth, they would obtain a blessed immortality. In this particular the combat which God has maintained with Satan, appears to have resembled a duel; and the result of it has been, that the Divinity of God's word has been raised as a superstructure out of the infamy and ruin of Satan.

8. THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH

The divine Omnipotence and Wisdom have principally employed these arguments, to prove the Divinity of this blessed word. But, that the Church might not defile herself by that basest vice, ingratitude of heart, and that she might perform a supplementary service in aid of God her Author and of Christ her Head, she also by her testimony adds to the Divinity of this word. But it is only an addition; she does not impart Divinity to it; her province is merely an indication of the Divine nature of this word, but she does not communicate to it the impress of Divinity. For unless this word had been Divine when there was no Church in existence, it would not have been possible for her members "to be born of this word, as of incorruptible seed," (1 Pet. i. 23,) to become the sons of God, and, through faith in this word, "to be made partakers of the Divine Nature." (2 Pet. i. 4.) The very name of "authority" takes away from the Church the power of conferring Divinity on this doctrine. For Authority is derived from an Author: But the Church is not the Author, she is only the nursling of this word, being posterior to it in cause, origin, and time. We do not listen to those who raise this objection: "The Church is of greater antiquity than the scripture, because at the time when that word had not been consigned to writing, the Church had even then an existence." To trifle in a serious matter with such cavils as this, is highly unbecoming in Christians, unless they have changed their former godly manners and are transformed into Jesuits. The Church is not more ancient than this saying: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" (Gen. iii. 15,) although she had an existence before this sentence was recorded by Moses in Scripture. For it was by the faith which they exercised on this saying, that Adam and Eve became the Church of God; since, prior to that, they were traitors, deserters and the kingdom of Satan—that grand deserter and apostate. The Church is indeed the pillar of the truth, (1 Tim. iii. 15,) but it is built upon that truth as upon a foundation, and thus directs to the truth, and brings it forward into the sight of men. In this way the Church performs the part of a director and a witness to this truth, and its guardian, herald, and interpreter. But in her acts of interpretation, the Church is confined to the sense of the word itself, and is tied down to the expressions of Scripture: for, according to the prohibition of St. Paul, it neither becomes her to be wise above that which is written;" (1 Cor. iv. 6,) nor is it possible for her to be so, since she is hindered both by her own imbecility, and the depth of things divine.

But it will reward our labour, if in a few words we examine the efficacy of this testimony, since such is the pleasure of the Papists, who constitute "the authority of the Church" the commencement and the termination of our certainty, when she bears witness to the scripture that it is the word of God. In the first place, the efficacy of the testimony does not exceed the veracity of the witness. The veracity of the Church is the veracity of men. But the veracity of men is imperfect and inconstant, and is always such as to give occasion to this the remark of truth, "All men are liars." Neither is the veracity of him that speaks, sufficient to obtain

credit to his testimony, unless the veracity of him who bears witness concerning the truth appear plain and evident to him to whom he makes the declaration. But in what manner will it be possible to make the veracity of the Church plain and evident? This must be done, either by a notion conceived, long time before, or by an impression recently made on the minds of the hearers. But men possess no such innate notion of the veracity of the Church as is tantamount to that which declares, "God is true and cannot lie." ([Tit. i. 2.](#)) It is necessary, therefore, that it be impressed by some recent action; such impression being made either from within or from without. But the Church is not able to make any inward impression, for she bears her testimony by external instruments alone, and does not extend to the inmost parts of the soul. The impression, therefore, will be external; which can be no other than a display and indication of her knowledge and probity, as well as testimony, often truly so called. But all these things can produce nothing more than an opinion in the minds of those to whom they are offered. Opinion, therefore, and not knowledge, is the supreme effect of this efficacy.

But the Papists retort, "that Christ himself established the authority of his Church by this saying, "He that heareth you, heareth me." ([Luke x. 16.](#)) When these unhappy reasoners speak thus, they seem not to be aware that they are establishing the authority of Scripture before that of the Church. For it is necessary that credence should be given to that expression as it was pronounced by Christ, before any authority can, on its account, be conceded to the Church. But the same reason will be as tenable in respect to the whole Scripture as to this expression. Let the Church then be content with that honour which Christ conferred on her when he made her the guardian of his word, and appointed her to be the director and witness to it, the herald and the interpreter.

III. Yet since the arguments arising from all those observations which we have hitherto adduced, and from any others which are calculated to prove the Divinity of the scriptures, can neither disclose to us a right understanding of the scriptures, nor seal on our minds those meanings which we have understood, (although the certainty of faith which God demands from us, and requires us to exercise in his word, consists of these meanings,) it is a necessary consequence, that to all these things ought to be added something else, by the efficacy of which that certainty may be produced in our minds. And this is the very subject on which we are not prepared to treat in this the third part of our discourse

9. THE INTERNAL WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We declare, therefore, and we continue to repeat the declaration, till the gates of hell re-echo the sound, "that the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration holy men of God have spoken this word, and by whose impulse and guidance they have, as his amanuenses, consigned it to writing; that this Holy Spirit is the author of that light by the aid of which we obtain a perception and an understanding of the divine meanings of the word, and is the Effector of that Certainty by which we believe those meaning to be truly divine; and that He is the necessary Author, the all sufficient Effector." (1.) Scripture demonstrates that He is the necessary Author, when it says, "The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. ii. 11.) No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) (2.) But the Scripture introduced him as the sufficient and the more than sufficient Effector, when it declares, "The wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, he hath revealed unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 7, 10.) The sufficiency, therefore, of the Spirit proceeds from the plenitude of his knowledge of the secrets of God, and from the very efficacious revelation which he makes of them. This sufficiency of the Spirit cannot be more highly extolled than it is in a subsequent passage, in which the same apostle most amply commends it, by declaring, "he that is spiritual [a partaker of this revelation,] judgeth all things," (verse 15,) as having the mind of Christ through his Spirit, which he has received. Of the same sufficiency the Apostle St. John is the most illustrious herald. In his general Epistle he writes these words: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." (1 John ii. 27.) "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." (1 John v. 10.) To the Thessalonians another apostle writes thus: "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. (1 Thess. i. 3.) In this passage he openly attributes to the power of the Holy Ghost the Certainty by which the faithful receive the word of the gospel. The Papists reply, "Many persons boast of the revelation of the Spirit, who, nevertheless, are destitute of such a revelation. It is impossible, therefore, for the faithful safely to rest in it." Are these fair words? Away with such blasphemy! If the Jews glory in their Talmud and their Cabala, and the Mahometans in their Alcoran, and if both of these boast themselves that they are Churches, cannot credence therefore be given with sufficient safety to the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, when they affirm their Divine Origin? Will the true Church be any less a Church because the sons of the stranger arrogate that title to themselves? This is the distinction between opinion and knowledge. It is their opinion, that they know that of which they are really ignorant. But they who do know it, have an assured perception of their knowledge. "It is the Spirit that beareth witness that the Spirit is truth"

(1 John v. 8,) that is, the doctrine and the meanings comprehended in that doctrine, are truth."

"But that attesting witness of the Spirit which is revealed in us, cannot convince others of the truth of the Divine word." What then? It will convince them when it has also breathed on them: it will breathe its Divine afflatus on them, if they be the sons of the church, all of whom shall be taught of God: every man of them will hear and learn of the Father, and will come unto Christ." (John vi. 45.) Neither can the testimony of any Church convince all men of the truth and divinity of the sacred writings. The Papists, who arrogate to themselves exclusively the title of "the Church," experience the small degree of credit which is given to their testimonies, by those who have not received an afflatus from the spirit of the Roman See.

"But it is necessary that there should be a testimony in the Church of such a high character as to render it imperative on all men to pay it due deference." True. It was the incumbent duty of the Jews to pay deference to the testimony of Christ when he was speaking to them; the Pharisees ought not to have contradicted Stephen in the midst of his discourse; and Jews and Gentiles, without any exception, were bound to yield credence to the preaching of the apostles, confirmed as it was by so many and such astonishing miracles. But the duties here recited, were disregarded by all these parties. What was the reason of this their neglect? The voluntary hardening of their hearts, and that blindness of their minds, which was introduced by the Devil.

If the Papists still contend, that "such a testimony as this ought to exist in the Church, against which no one shall actually offer any contradiction," we deny the assertion. And experience testifies, that a testimony of this kind never yet had an existence, that it does not now exist, and (if we may form our judgment from the scriptures,) we certainly think that it never will exist.

"But perhaps the Holy Ghost, who is the Author and Effector of this testimony, has entered into an engagement with the Church, not to inspire and seal on the minds of men this certainty, except through her, and by the intervention of her authority." The Holy Ghost does, undoubtedly, according to the good pleasure of his own will, make use of some organ or instrument in performing these his offices. But this instrument is the word of God, which is comprehended in the sacred books of scripture; an instrument produced and brought forward by Himself, and instructed in his truth. The Apostle to the Hebrews in a most excellent manner describes the efficacy which is impressed on this instrument by the Holy Spirit, in these words: "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv, 10.) Its effect is called "Faith," by the Apostle. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. x. 7.) If any act of the Church occurs in this place, it is that by which she is

occupied in the sincere preaching of this word, and by which she sedulously exercises herself in promoting its publication. But even this is not so properly the occupation of the Church, as of "the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers," whom Christ has constituted his labourers "for the edifying of his body, which is the Church." ([Ephes. iv. 11.](#)) But we must in this place deduce an observation from the very nature of things in genera], as well as of this thing in particular; it is, that the First Cause can extend much farther by its own action, than it is possible for an instrumental cause to do; and that the Holy Ghost gives to the word all that force which he afterwards employs, such being the great efficacy with which it is endued and applied, that whomsoever he only counsels by his word he himself persuades by imparting Divine meanings to the word, by enlightening the mind as with a lamp, and by inspiring and sealing it by his own immediate action. The Papists pretend, that certain acts are necessary to the production of true faith; and they say that those acts cannot be performed except by the judgment and testimony of the Church—such as to believe that any book is the production of Matthew or Luke—to discern between a Canonical and an Apocryphal verse, and to distinguish between this or that reading, according to the variation in different copies. But, since there is a controversy concerning the weight and necessity of those acts, and since the dispute is no less than how far they may be performed by the Church—lest I should fatigue my most illustrious auditory by two great prolixity, I will omit at present any further mention of these topics; and will by Divine assistance explain them at some future opportunity.

My most illustrious and accomplished hearers, we have already perceived, that both the pages of our sacred Theology are full of God and Christ, and of the Spirit of both of them. If any inquiry be made for the Object, God and Christ by the Spirit are pointed out to us. If we search for the Author, God and Christ by the operation of the Spirit spontaneously occur. If we consider the End proposed, our union with God and Christ offers itself—an end not to be obtained except through the communication of the Spirit. If we inquire concerning the Truth and Certainty of the doctrine; God in Christ, by means of the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, most clearly convinces our minds of the Truth, and in a very powerful manner seals the Certainty on our hearts.

All the glory, therefore, of this revelation is deservedly due to God and Christ in the Holy Spirit: and most deservedly are thanks due from us to them, and must be given to them, through the Holy Ghost, for such an august and necessary benefit as this which they have conferred on us. But we can present to our God and Christ in the Holy Spirit no gratitude more grateful, and can ascribe no glory more glorious, than this, the application of our minds to an assiduous contemplation and a devout meditation on the knowledge of such a noble object. But in our meditations upon it, (to prevent us from straying into the paths of error,) let us betake ourselves to the revelation which has been made of this doctrine. From the word of this revelation alone, let us learn the wisdom of endeavouring, by an ardent

desire and in an unwearied course, to attain unto that ultimate design which ought to be our constant aim—that most blessed end of our union with God and Christ. Let us never indulge in any doubts concerning the truth of this revelation; but, "the full assurance of faith being impressed upon our minds and hearts by the inspiration and sealing of the Holy Spirit, let us adhere to this word, "till[at length] we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." ([Ephes. iv. 13.](#)) I most humbly supplicate and intreat God our merciful Father, that he would be pleased to grant this great blessing to us, through the Son of his love, and by the communication of his Holy Spirit. And to him be ascribed all praise, and honour, and glory, forever and ever. Amen.