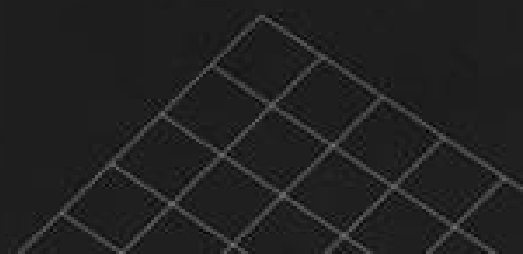


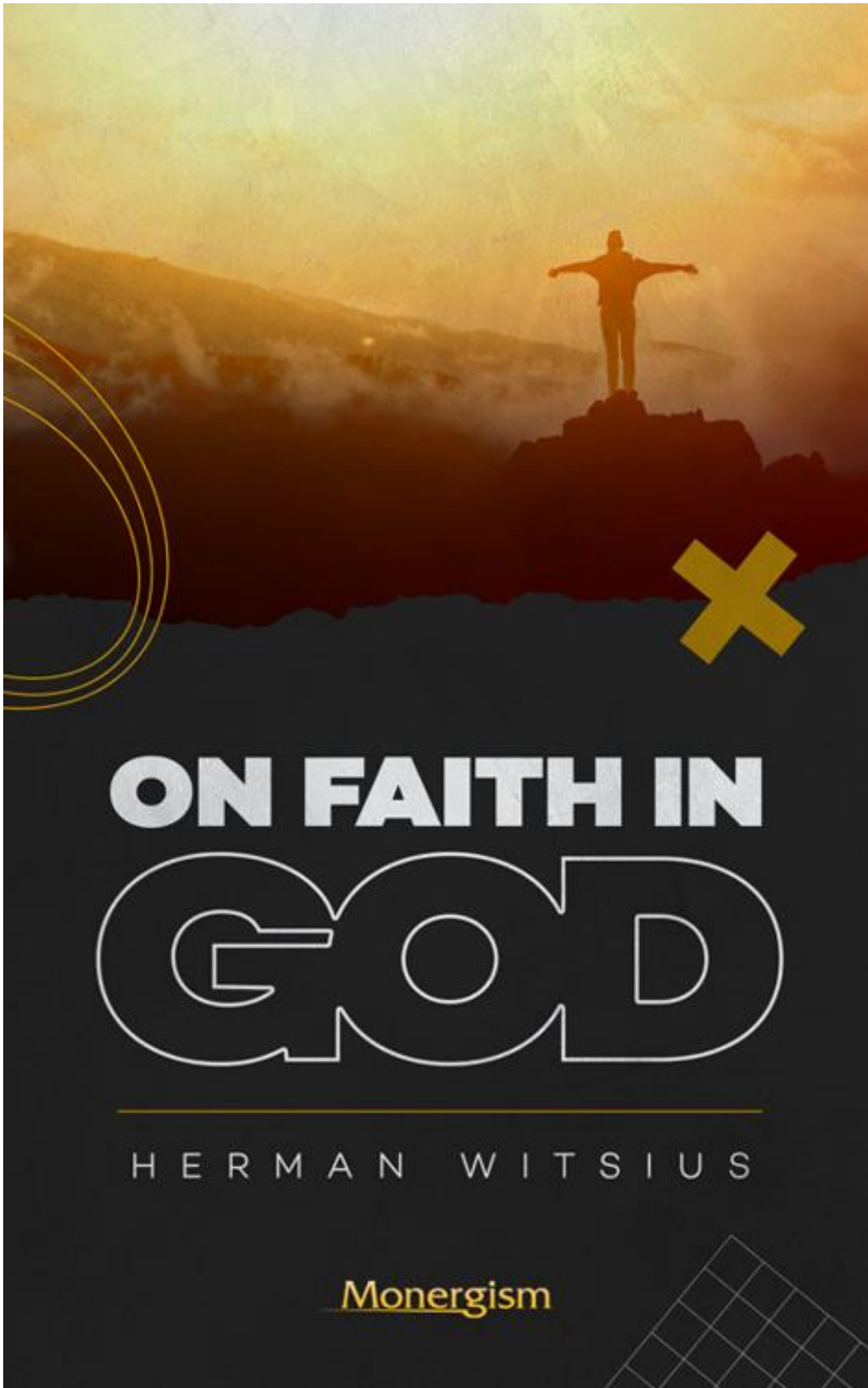


ON FAITH IN
GOD

HERMAN WITSIUS

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by Herman Witsius, D. D.

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DISSERTATION I

ON THE FAITH OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

I. GOD is at once the principal and the ultimate object of faith; "Ye believe in God," said our Lord to his disciples; and says the Apostle Peter,— "who by Him," that is, Christ, "do believe in God."b Believers consider God as the self-existent, uncreated truth,* on whom they may rely with the greatest safety; and as the supreme felicity, united

to whom by faith, they may become inexpressibly happy. The Creed, accordingly, begins with these words, I BELIEVE IN GOD.

II. Many have supposed that these three phrases, *Credere Deum*, to believe God, *credere Deo*, to believe God,[†] and *credere in Deum*, to believe in God, ought to be thus distinguished; that the first means, to be persuaded of his existence;[‡] the second, to give credit to God when he testifies any thing; the third, to rely upon God with a saving confidence of soul.

III. But as this distinction has no foundation in the Scriptures, so it takes its rise from total ignorance of the Hebrew idiom. The expression *Credere Deum*, to believe God, no where occurs in holy writ. Paul says, "he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is: and in Deum credere, to believe in God, is a Hebraism, contrary to the ancient purity both of the Greek and the Latin tongue.—The Hebrews use indifferently, ל, or ב, in connexion with חָאמִין; as in the expression וַיֵּאמְרוּ בְדַבְרֵי ה' "Then believed they his words," and, לֹא יֵאמְרוּ לְדַבְרֵי ה' "They believed not his word." This Hebraism, in common with many others, was imitated by the Hellenists,²² and by the sacred writers of the New Testament. Let the following instance suffice. In John 8:30. it is said, πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, "many believed on him;" and verse 31. the same persons are called πεπιστευκοτάς αὐτῷ, "those who believed him." Hence it appears that they are greatly mistaken, who assert that the expression to believe in one, signifies that devout affection of mind which is an homage due to God alone; for it is expressly said, וַיֵּאמְרוּ כִּי הוּא וּבְמֹשֶׁה עֲבָדוּ, "and believed (in) the LORD, and (in) his servant Moses." Those, also, are mistaken, who suppose that the phrase to believe in God or in Christ, is always descriptive of a living faith; since it is said of the Ninevites that they believed in God, and of the Jews, that they "believed in his," to wit, Christ's "name," to whom "Jesus did not commit himself;"—whilst, on the contrary, a different expression is made use of, to denote a living and saving faith, in John 5:24. πιστευῶν τῷ πέμψαντί με, "he that believeth him that sent me;" and

in the account of the Jailor, πεπιστευκως τω θεῳ, "who believed God," both phrases are used indiscriminately.*

IV. When we speak of GOD, we understand a Being who is infinitely perfect, since he is the Creator and Lord of all other beings. This is the idea common to all nations, which they express, each in their own language, whenever they make mention of God. Now, in order to a man's believing in God, it is necessary, first of all, that he be firmly persuaded in his mind that such an infinitely perfect Being doth really exist. "For he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is." But, since this persuasion lays a foundation for itself in NATURE, upon which GRACE rears the superstructure of Divine revelation, it will be proper to see, first, what nature can teach us on this topic, and then, what the Christian faith superadds to the persuasion derived from nature.

V. The existence of God is so necessary and so evident a truth, that to one rightly attending to the subject, scarcely any thing can appear more certain, more obvious, or more manifest. It is clear even from that notion of a Deity which is common to all nations. Whoever speaks of God, speaks of a Being infinitely perfect. Such a Being, however, cannot even be conceived of in thought, without including in our conception the necessity of his existence. For, since it is a greater perfection to exist than not to exist; to exist necessarily than to exist contingently and according to the pleasure of another; to exist from eternity and to eternity, than to exist at one time and not to exist at another time;—it follows that existence, even a necessary and eternal existence, is implied in the essence of a most perfect Being. It is as impossible to form an idea of a most perfect Being without necessary existence, as an idea of a mountain without a valley.

Besides, the man who denies that there is a God, denies, at the same time, that it is possible for an absolutely perfect and eternal Being to exist. For if he at any time begin to exist, he will not be eternal, and therefore not absolutely perfect, and consequently not God. But it is

impossible that a being who neither is, nor can begin to be, can ever exist. According to this supposition, then, the impossibility of existence will be included in the conception of a Deity; which is no less contradictory, than if one should say, that the want of eminent perfection is necessarily included in the conception of that which is infinitely perfect.

VI. The Creator has so deeply impressed the idea of his own existence on the human mind, that all may receive this knowledge from nature. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them." This is what is usually termed the innate knowledge of God. Eusebius speaks, not improperly, of the "notions which every one learns from himself, or rather from God."* It is not intended, that infants possess an actual knowledge of God even from the womb; which is equally contrary to universal experience, and to the word of God, which testifies that they "cannot discern between their right hand and their left." Nor is the above expression to be so loosely understood, as if God merely endowed men with a capacity of knowing himself, provided the proofs of his existence be clearly proposed and set before them, or provided every one make a right use of his capacity in the investigation of those proofs;—as if the knowledge of God's existence could not be attained without laborious exertion. But we intend, that God has so deeply impressed the traces of himself upon the innermost parts of the mind, that man, after having arrived at the use of reason, cannot but often think of a God, and it is only by doing violence to himself that he can expel such thoughts from his breast.

VII. Maximus Tyrius, the Platonic philosopher, has the following beautiful sentence in his first Dissertation.* "But if, since the beginning of time, two or three men have existed, that have lived in an atheistical, degraded and senseless state, deceived by their own eyes and ears, maimed in their very soul,—a brutish and unprofitable kind of men, no less destitute of the distinguishing glory of their species, than a lion without courage, an ox without horns, or a bird without wings;—from even these men you will learn something

concerning a Deity; for, in spite of themselves, they both know and express something on this subject." Julian, too, ungodly as he was, expresses himself equally well, as follows: "All of us, previously to our receiving instruction, are persuaded that there is a Deity; and that to him we should look, to him we should hasten. Our minds are inclined towards him in the same manner, I think, as our eyes towards light."

VIII. This argument is illustrated by the operations of Conscience, which, in a variety of ways, convinces men of the existence of God. 1st, As it is the deputy of God, and the depositary of his laws in the human breast, it inculcates, in the name of God, what ought to be done, and what ought to be avoided. So great, too, is the authority with which it speaks, that though the lords of the earth, and dreaded tyrants, should establish a thousand decrees in opposition to its dictates, it would, nevertheless, incessantly urge by its secret whispers, that obedience must be rendered to itself, and to God, in whose name it speaks, rather than to any mortal whatever. It says concisely, and with a dignity worthy of a Lawgiver, "Universal submission is due to me, and to God."* This is what David intends when he says, "My heart said unto thee,"^m that is, for thee, in thy behalf, in thy place. 2dly, While it is acquainted with the most hidden secrets of men, and while neither the least imagination, nor the slightest motion of the mind, can be concealed from its view, it testifies, at the same time, that there is another besides itself, who is thoroughly acquainted with all our actions, words and thoughts. It is for this reason it is called Conscience,[†] that is, a witness associated with another in perceiving the secrets of man; and who can that other be but God? On this account, also, it may be denominated "Conscience towards God." 3dly, When it judges the state and the actions of men, it performs this office under God, and with reference to God. Whilst it commends good works, even though performed in secret, and though disapproved by others, it gives us to know that the praise of the upright "is not of men, but of God."^o When it rewards the good man with a most delightful tranquillity, and, in particular, when it causes his peace to abound in dying moments, it shows that

God is the Rewarder of those who serve him. When it reproveth, accuses, condemns, punishes, and scourges a man without mercy for his wicked deeds, although it is within the man, and indeed a part of him, it stands, however, on God's side; nor doth it regard the degree of torment which the man may suffer from its testimony. Nay, though it be a thousand times enjoined to keep silence, though it be treated with violence, though it be almost stifled, and seared as with a hot iron, yet it rises again, and sharply presses its testimony, in defiance of the struggles of the guilty. 4thly, Amidst all these operations, it summons man to the tribunal of God, and intimates that there all things are to be re-examined, and a more exact judgment to be passed on every action; and, according to the sentence which it has pronounced here, it causes him either to come into the presence of God with confidence, or to tremble at the thought of appearing before him. Such, also, is the energy which it displays, that it will not suffer itself to be hindered in these operations by any created power. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." Paul gives us a concise summary of the greater part of these operations, when he says of the Gentiles, "These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." Nor are these the terrors of weak minds, which the stronger can easily elude. Conscience often restrains and overawes the boldest; and the most daring profligate, though he may assume the semblance of hope in his countenance, only conceals the pain which deeply pierces his heart. The laughter of such audacious transgressors is merely constrained, while they feel the smart of the sting within.

IX. This faculty of Conscience, because it so powerfully manifests God to man, doth all in his name, refers all to him, and, in short, acts the part of his vicegerent in the soul, was called God by the Heathen. Hence Menander says, "Our mind is God."* Euripides, in like manner, quoted by Gataker, says, "Our own mind is to each of us

God."† By this, they intended nothing else, probably, than what that old writer expresses more clearly thus, "In all men, conscience stands in the place of God."‡ But the following passage of Epictetus is particularly worthy of notice: "Knowest thou not that thou nourishest a God? That thou givest exercise to a God? Dost thou not carry God about with thee, thou wretch, and art not aware of this? You imagine, perhaps, that I refer to something external, formed of gold or silver. Let me tell you that you carry him within your breast... But whilst God himself is present within, and sees and hears all things, art thou not ashamed, as if insensible to thine own nature, and hostile to God, to think and to do these things?"* For the same reason, Plato says, "He mystically called those Atheists, who corrupt the God who dwelleth in them, that is, Reason."†

X. The mind, also, which attends to itself, cannot be ignorant that as it was made by God, so it was made for God. Since it is clear and evident to the mind, that it did not consent of its own accord and by deliberate counsel to inhabit this body which it carries about; nor form the body for itself; nor subject it to its authority; nor even knows how the bodily members in subjection to it, are moved according to its will; nor existed any where else before it lodged in the body; nor became what it is by the contrivance or power of parents; nor is able to furnish itself with what it perceives to be necessary to its welfare; nor can find in itself the cause of its existence;—it is forced to acknowledge that it was created, and that, therefore, it is the property of him who created it. This can be no other than God; and, as it was made by him, it necessarily follows that it was also made for him. The eye is adapted for light, the ear for sounds, the tongue for speech, and speech for the interpretation of the mind. For what is the mind itself adapted? For an object, certainly, which can fill it—an object, the knowledge of which can make it wise, the love of which can make it holy, the enjoyment of which can make it happy. For an object, better than itself, nobler than all created things, and most amply sufficient to satisfy its boundless capacities. For an object, in short, which is nothing less than God. The human mind, provided it only give attention to the

subject, must clearly perceive, that if no such object as this existed, it could never have itself existed, or if it had, must have existed in vain, and for no proper purpose. That man offers violence to his own mind, who does not say, "Where is God my Maker, that giveth songs in the night?"

XI. But, besides that innate knowledge of God, of which man has the principles in his own mind, there is another argument arising from the consideration of the various other creatures around him. Since these are unable to secure the continuance of their own existence, it is manifest that they were not made by themselves: and if we trace them particularly, through the second causes of their being, as far backwards as our mind is able to conduct us, we must arrive, at length, at the First Cause, to whom those that are supposed to be the first of creatures owe the beginning of their existence, and in whose eternity, (as he exists necessarily, of himself, and without beginning,) all our thoughts are swallowed up, as in an immeasurable abyss. The sacred writings instruct us in numberless passages, that the existence of the Supreme Being may be inferred, by incontrovertible arguments, from the contemplation of the creatures.

XII. A very emphatical passage to this effect occurs in Job 12:7, 8, 9. "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" Here we are directed to hold a conference with the creatures, that they may instruct us concerning the Creator. That conference can mean nothing but an attentive consideration of the creatures, in their origin, in their nature, in their capacities, in their operations, in their order and mutual subserviency to each other, in the law to which they are subject, and which is inviolably observed for the preservation of the whole. The response which they give, the doctrine which they unfold, is the demonstration of the Deity. They had no power to produce themselves, and even now they have no power to uphold themselves in being, far less to govern themselves with so

much wisdom, that every one, in its own sphere, should both possess what is sufficient for the continuation of its own existence, and be adapted for assisting others and for serving the whole universe, as it most judiciously ranged in a family and state, Notwithstanding, therefore, the profound silence which they observe, they proclaim to every reflecting mind, that, as they were originally created, so they are still directed, by the hand of an infinitely wise, as well as infinitely powerful God. Let it be remarked, also, that this conclusion is not ascribed to any tradition received from the fathers, but to that very instruction which the creatures themselves afford, independently of all human tradition.

XIII. No less forcible is the testimony which we have, Psalm 19:1, 2, 3, 4. which I shall explain by a short paraphrase. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" for they are his throne, which he has curiously fashioned, and which testify his power, majesty, and magnificence. "And the firmament showeth his handy-work;" proclaiming that it was adjusted by his word alone, that things below might be aptly and commodiously united with things above, and that things terrestrial might be maintained by the influence of things celestial, communicating itself through the medium of the firmament. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge." The vicissitudes of light and darkness, succeeding one another in so exact and so uniform an order; and, (which is the cause of these appointed vicissitudes,) the revolution of the sun and the stars, neither moving more slowly than at the first, nor revolving with a more rapid motion, but still preserving the original measure of their course,—clearly manifest a Ruler of unbounded wisdom. Nor is there a single day, or single night, which doth not at once utter something for itself respecting God, and bear witness to another; as if it were the scholar of the preceding, and the teacher of the following. No word is uttered, no speeches are made, their voice "is not heard." They do not teach by words; because, were this their manner of giving instruction, it would cease with the utterance of the words. They do not instruct by speeches, or discourses, which consist of a train of arguments artfully connected;

for, in such discourses, some degree of obscurity could hardly be avoided. Nor do they utter an audible voice in our ears, the sound of which might dun us by its excessive noise. But the heavens instruct us, constantly, clearly, and pleasantly, whilst they exhibit the perfections of their Creator to view, as in a mirror. Some, however, choose to translate the words thus, (of which we do not disapprove:) "There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard." Though the nations differ from one another in their languages, and though the Greek may not be able to understand the Barbarian, yet the language of the heavens is common to all, and equally capable of imparting instruction to all. Nothing but listlessness hinders those, whose tongues and customs are the most opposite to each other, from receiving knowledge, so to speak, from the mouth of one and the same teacher. "Their line is gone out to all the earth."* The manner in which the heavens give instruction, bears a resemblance to the method of teachers, who instruct boys in the first principles of literature by means of figures which they draw for their use: For the luminaries of heaven, by the beams which they shed, form lines, and, as it were, first principles; which, being mutually combined, and variously connected, compose one entire book of wisdom. This idea is suggested by the word יָרָא line; as in the expression יָרָא יָרָא line upon line. It may be observed, also, that there is but little difference betwixt this Hebrew term, and the Greek φθογγος, made use of by the Apostle; for φθογγος signifies not only a sound, but likewise a letter; as in Plutarch on Fabius; of which Scapula has taken notice in his Lexicon. This line, then, has "gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." All mankind, whether they inhabit cultivated regions, or the most desert and uncultivated parts of the earth, are instructed by this preceptor. There is no quarter of the world in which the figures of heaven, which are so many proofs of the divine perfections, are not beheld.

XIV. Though this exposition of the passage is at once simple, consonant to the words, and worthy of the divine perfections, Socinus most perversely contends, that it is here taken for granted, that it is not evident from the contemplation of the heavens, that

they were created by God. He denies that they proclaim the glory of God to any but those who have been previously persuaded, by other means, of the existence of God, and of the creation of the world. What is said, too, about their line going out to all the earth, he restrains to Judea alone, adducing in confirmation of this sense, Psalm 45:16. 105:7. 2:8. This, however, is a daring perversion of the Scriptures; for, 1st, It is clear to any one who looks into the Psalm, that the Psalmist points out two ways of knowing God; the one by nature, which he describes from the beginning to the seventh verse; the other by revelation, which he then illustrates, and extols as far more perfect. Nor does he represent the latter as the foundation of the former, but the former as the foundation of the latter. 2dly, The words of the Psalm, cannot bear the interpretation which Socinus puts upon them, to wit, "The firmament showeth the nature and kind of the work, or celebrates the work:"* But they must be interpreted thus, "The firmament showeth the work of his hands;" that is, proclaims itself to be the work of divine omnipotence. In this sense the heavens, the sun, the moon, and all the sparkling stars, are said to praise God; because, since they were all created at his command, they furnish men with the most abundant matter and ground for the celebration of his praise. 3dly, Nor is this proclamation made to the Jews only: it is published in a language equally intelligible to Israelites, Greeks, and Barbarians; for he never left himself "without witness," even to the Gentiles.w 4thly, It is published through the whole earth, even to the uttermost parts of the habitable globe; which are by no means comprehended within the narrow circuit of Judea: unless one chose also to confine within the limits of Judea, what the Apostle expresses in the same words, concerning that Gospel which is preached "to every creature."y 5thly, Nor is the heretic able to point out any passage of Scripture, where these expressions, the whole earth, and the uttermost parts of the world, signify only the land of Judea; for the testimonies which he produces, are foreign to the purpose. Psalm 45:16. is a prophecy respecting the calling of the Gentiles; as appears from verse 17th. Psalm 105:7, "His judgments are in all the earth," is with no appearance of reason confined to Judea; since God executes judgments in the whole world,

and those which he executed among his people, were published to the Gentiles. The heretic erroneously confounds the judgments of God's works with the judgments of his law; which, under the old dispensation, were made known to the Israelites alone. Though we should grant that Judea is sometimes called the whole earth, yet the ends of the habitable world, are never limited to so inconsiderable a spot of earth. The words in Psalm 2:8. refer not to the kingdom of David, but to the kingdom of Christ; to whom "all power is given in heaven and on earth;" and whose "dominion shall he from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."b 6thly, Though this were the meaning of the expression in some other passages, yet it cannot be so understood here; since the subject treated in this passage, is the whole of that earth, where the line of the sun is beheld,—where his glorious beams are seen, where his all-maturing heat is felt

XV. We may add, that, in reality, had it not been long ago ascertained that these most audacious perverters of the Scriptures are lost to every emotion of shame, they must have been put out of countenance, on this occasion, by the more intelligent among the heathen; a great number of whom avow, that they were excited and compelled to acknowledge a Deity, purely by the consideration of the heavens, and the stars, and of the order which is observed in the universe. Plato's expression is well known: "The heavens never cease to give instruction to mankind."* To the same effect are the following words of Lucilius in Cicero;† "What can be so obvious, and so clear, when we have beheld the heavens and contemplated the celestial bodies, as that there is a Deity possessed of the most consummate wisdom, by whom they are governed?" And again, a little after; "If any one doubts of this, I know no reason why he may not also doubt of the existence of the Sun; for what can be more evident?" I shall quote another passage from Cicero. "Who is so stupid and infatuated," says he, "as not to perceive, after having looked up to the heavens, that there are Gods; or to ascribe to the operation of chance, works which discover so great intelligence, that scarcely any one is able, by any art, to trace their order, and their revolutions."* But why do I insist on the convictions and declarations of

individuals? Zaleucus, the lawgiver of the Locrians, by a law which he enacted, bound all his fellow-citizens to acknowledge a Divinity, from the contemplation of the heavens. According to the testimony of Diodorus Siculus, "Zaleucus, having been chosen by the people to frame laws, and attempting to confirm them by new sanctions, began by directing their attention to the celestial Gods. At the beginning of the preamble to the whole code he says; that the inhabitants of the city are required, first of all, to believe and to be firmly persuaded that there are Gods, and having attentively considered the heavens and their astonishing magnificence and order, to conclude that they are neither the production of chance, nor the workmanship of man."†

XVI. Further, where can we find a more striking confirmation of the doctrine we are now illustrating, than the following remarkable expression of Paul? "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead." Here notice, 1st, What respecting God the Apostle affirms to be known. 2dly, In what manner it is known. 3dly, From what time. 4thly, Whence this knowledge is derived.

XVII. 1st, What is it that is known respecting God? The Apostle, in the first place, shows, in general, that it is his "invisible things;" for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion, that God is a Spirit, quite distinct from the whole mass of matter, and invisible to every eye. He then takes particular notice of what is included in these "invisible things." 1. His POWER; which, by his own simple fiat, with no assistance whatever, with no advantage arising from pre-existent matter—by his mere good pleasure—causes all things to exist, and to continue in existence so long as he pleases. 2. His ETERNITY; which has neither beginning nor end of days, nor any thing corresponding to the succession of time. Unless God had existed from eternity, he could not have existed at all; for that which neither existed from eternity, nor is capable of being produced, has no existence; but that God is produced, is an idea utterly repugnant to every dictate of reason. A Being, too, who had no beginning, can have no end; for he

possesses, in his own perfections, the cause of a necessary existence. Aristotle has, somewhere, finely said: "Necessary existence and eternity are inseparable from each other."* Unless God were eternal, besides, he could not be the lord of time, and the disposer of seasons. Synesius, accordingly, has the following elegant expression in his third Hymn, "Thou, who art the Eternal Mind, art the Root of the world."† 3. His GODHEAD; which here means the perfections and excellencies of God; in particular, his self-sufficiency and absolute independence, and also the relation in which he stands to the creatures, as the Lord of all, and therefore entitled to the love and the service of all.

XVIII. 2dly, In what manner are these things known? They are "clearly seen by the mind."* 1. Though-not perceptible to the eye of the body, they are perceptible to the mind and soul: To the mind, however, that gives attention,† and considers them; not to the mind that either resigns itself to stupidity and torpor, or that impiously excludes the light, and surrenders itself to a voluntary blindness. 2. By the attentive mind, they are "clearly seen:" For this knowledge, like the knowledge of those objects that are presented to the faithful eye, (as the sun, who enlightens the world, or the moon, or the stars,) is so prompt and easy, that men cannot reasonably demand a more ample or obvious demonstration.

XIX. 3dly, From what time are these things thus clearly seen? "From the creation of the world."‡ Some construe this clause in connexion with the words preceding, and give the sense thus, Those things which have been invisible ever since the creation of the world. But as the properties of the divine nature are necessarily and eternally invisible, it is better to refer the expression to what follows: They are clearly seen from the creation of the world. This, again, is susceptible of two senses. 1. It may denote the source of knowledge; as if the Apostle had said, "from the consideration of the creation of the world:" as in these words, "By their fruits ye shall know them." 2. It may respect the time; the Apostle may intimate, that those

perfections of God have been displayed to mankind, as long as the world has existed, and been inhabited by the human race.

XX. 4thly, Whence, in fine, can men derive the knowledge of these perfections?—From "the things that are made." The works of nature, which our eyes behold, testify concerning themselves, that they are "things made,"* that is, that they have a Cause, a Maker, an Architect. Thus they lead us to the Maker of all, who, whilst he is entirely free from the imperfections of the creatures, possesses all their excellencies in a supereminent degree.

XXI. The way in which Socinus perverts the Apostle's expressions in this passage, is truly surprising. By "the invisible things of God," he understands the mysteries of the Gospel, which are said to "have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." "His eternal godhead," he affirms to be "that which God would constantly have us to do;" in which sense, he says, the term "godhead" is employed in Col. 2:9. "His eternal power," he would have to be, "the promises which shall never fail;" in which sense Paul had said, in a preceding verse of the chapter, that the Gospel is "the power of God." Finally, he refers "the things that are made," to the miracles performed by God, and Christ, and the Apostles.

XXII. On this strange exposition, we offer the following remarks. 1st, The heretic perverts the scope of the Apostle; which is to convince the Gentiles, who were destitute of the written word of God, of their having sinned and merited the curse; in the same manner as he convinces of their guilt and danger, the Jews who possessed the written word;—that thus he may establish the conclusion, that both of them must be justified solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ. It is manifest, therefore, that the Apostle here considers the Gentiles, as in a state of nature, in the darkness of Paganism, not yet enlightened by the preaching of the Gospel.

XXIII. 2dly, He perverts, also, the words of the Apostle; for, 1. "The invisible things of God," are quite distinct from the mysteries of the

Gospel, which he does not even attempt to prove to be any where intended by that expression. The Apostle here opposes the eyes of the body to the eyes of the mind, and the things which he represents as invisible to the former, he asserts to be visible to the latter; as elsewhere he speaks of "the invisible God." With regard to Matth. 13:35. we have there another expression, and an extremely different subject; and that saying of Christ, therefore, is improperly adduced to illustrate this passage of Paul. 2. "Eternal godhead," and "that which God would constantly have us to do," are totally different from each other. To endeavour to pass them for the same, is worthy of a man, who, "having his conscience seared as with a hot iron," scruples not to confound things which are diametrically opposite to each other. By what authority, by what example, I say not from the sacred volume, but from any writer whatever, will he prove, that "godhead" is that which God would have us to do? That which he produces for this purpose from Col. 2:9. discovers only the rage of a furious mind. The expression there, is not *θειότης*, but *θεότης*. Nor does the word in that passage, denote that which God wills to be done by us; for how doth this dwell in Christ, and dwell bodily in him? But it signifies the divine nature itself, which resides in Christ, not typically and symbolically, as in the temple of old, but truly and really. 3. The "eternal power" of God, nowhere denotes his promises. The Gospel is called "the power of God," because it is an efficacious mean of salvation; the word "power" being taken in its native sense. The Apostle does not intend to intimate, that the Gospel is the promise of God; but that, in converting his elect by the preaching of the Gospel, accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, God displays "the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power." 4. Miracles are not usually called "things that are made,"* but "mighty deeds, signs, wonders." † *Ποῖημα* signifies a thing created by God, as in Ephes. 2:10. "For we are his workmanship, created," &c. ‡ *Ποῖημα* and *κτισμα* are words of the same import; and, accordingly, the Arians of old, blasphemously styled Christ, *Ποῖημα καὶ κτισμα*, a made being, and a creature.

XXIV. It is disgraceful for those who wish to be called Christians to wrest to another meaning, such clear and satisfactory testimonies of Scripture; since even heathens ascended from the consideration of the world to God its Creator. Aristotle, or whoever else is the Author of the Book concerning the world,§ says: "It is, therefore, an ancient doctrine, and a sentiment congenial to all mankind, that of God, and through God, all things were framed and established." This doctrine, however, doth not rest upon ancient tradition alone; it is strongly inferred from the imperfection of all the creatures. Hence it is added by that Author, "For no creature, deprived of that support which He affords, is sufficient for its own subsistence." This is fair reasoning. It is highly proper to rise from the imperfection and insufficiency of the creatures, to the absolutely perfect and all-sufficient Creator. Whatever is called imperfect, is accounted such, because it falls short of what is perfect. Take away that which is perfect, as Boethius reasons;* and it becomes impossible even to conceive, whence that which is deemed imperfect, derived its existence. Cicero also says, "The beauty of the world, and the order of the heavenly bodies, oblige us to acknowledge the existence of some glorious and eternal Being, whom mankind are bound to admire and adore."†

XXV. This truth is confirmed by the admirable predictions of astonishing events which were yet in the womb of futurity, by the fatal periods of monarchies, and by several other considerations of this sort. But as those arguments have been copiously illustrated by others, let it suffice that we have merely alluded to them here.

XXVI. Since the doctrine of the existence of God is established by so many, and by so clear and incontrovertible evidences, it ought to receive the firm assent of every individual. Doubts of it should not be entertained, at any time, or upon any pretext;—not even for the purpose of attaining, in consequence of doubting, a more certain knowledge and a stronger faith. This truth is so manifest, that no man who seriously attends, can seriously doubt of it. Those who were anciently called Atheists, were at once very few, and generally men of a profligate character, whose interest it was that there should be no

God. They were actuated, too, in their reasonings, rather by a love of contradiction, than by any sincere conviction of mind; like the man who contended that snow is black. Besides, as Vossius has shown,* persons were sometimes stigmatized as Atheists, merely because they renounced the false gods of the Gentiles. Whatever be the purpose in view, to plunge into doubts of the existence of God, is always contrary to piety. It is never right to say, "Perhaps there is no God; perhaps, in all the thoughts which we have of a Deity, we are deceived by some malignant and powerful spirit." This truth, however, must not be negligently passed over; nor are we rashly to presume that we already possess a competent knowledge of so noble a subject, lest, possibly, we may not duly love or adore a God whom we do not sufficiently know. To attend carefully and deliberately to this matter, is not to doubt of the existence of God, but to doubt concerning ourselves, whether we have discharged our duty in this respect with becoming diligence.

XXVII. Nature and Reason are able to teach man, though a sinner, all that we have hitherto said respecting the existence of God. Of all this, faith avails itself, as a groundwork; not overthrowing nature, but ascending by it, and above it. Tertullian, accordingly, well observes; "God has, in the first instance, appointed nature your teacher, intending to follow up her instructions with prophecy; that, having been the disciple of nature, you may the more readily give credit to prophecy."* Clement of Alexandria says, also, to the same effect: "The Greek philosophy, as it were, purifies and prepares the mind for the reception of faith; upon which, truth raises the superstructure of knowledge."† In this sense we may excuse his expression in another place, where he calls Natural Philosophy, "the groundwork of Christian Philosophy." ‡ Let us now see what Christian Faith superadds to this natural persuasion concerning the existence of God.

XXVIII. 1st, It disposes one to observe with attention, those proofs of a Deity which every part of the creation affords. "By faith we understand," observe, and consider. Many things "which may be

known of God," and which are placed in the clearest light, are neglected by the generality of men, their eyes being blinded. In this concern, the greater part of mankind are cold, languid, and torpid: and, hence, they either rest in a bare notion of the Divinity, or if they descend a little deeper into the contemplation of his character, are satisfied with meagre elements of truth, which they pollute by a large mixture of error; so that, while they seem to be wise, and give indulgence to their own reasonings, they are, in reality, fools. Those, in particular, who, instigated by the fury of a wicked mind, wish that there were no God, (of whose character, as the avenger of crimes, they cannot be ignorant,) exert themselves to suppress all thoughts of a Deity, which are never welcome to their hearts. Of such persons, the Apostle says, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge:" that is, as Theophylact explains it, "they rejected the knowledge of God." This, as Chrysostom observes, was, on their part, "not a sin of ignorance, but a wilful sin." It was of the same nature with the sin of those who say to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But Christian faith causes one to love the truth relating to God, and, consequently, to attend with care to the evidences by which the beloved truth is confirmed, and to take pleasure in the contemplation of them; singing to God, "My meditation of thee shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord."p It keeps at a distance, at the same time, all pretended wisdom and vain conceit of science, and determines a man to become an humble disciple of God, to hang upon his lips alone, and to desire instruction from him, in other matters relating to the Deity; saying, "Who teacheth like him?"

XXIX. 2dly, It is not satisfied with knowing the Divinity by those evidences which nature supplies; but depends, also, on the testimony of God, who testifies concerning himself, as well externally by the word of divine revelation, as internally by the secret voice of the Spirit. He BELIEVES that God is, because he hears his word, and finds it so wise, so pure, so sweet, so efficacious, and so full of majesty, that it can be nothing else than the word of God. As one believes that his father is present, because he hears his well known

voice, so faith believes that God is present in the world, because with her own ears she hears that divine voice, which, with incredible power and sweetness, penetrates to the inmost soul, and widely differs from all the illusions of deceiving spirits. As the spouse no sooner bears the familiar accents of her beloved Husband than straightway she cries out, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh;" so the believer, when he hears the voice of God in the world, knows and discerns it, and exclaims; "My Lord, and my God!"

XXX. 3dly, Nature teaches merely, in an indistinct and general manner, that there is a God; but doth not expressly and particularly declare WHAT he is. Maximus Tyrius, whom we formerly quoted, after having, in his first Dissertation, made some general remarks respecting the Deity, adds: "That distinguished Master of the Academy," (he intends Plato,) "shows that such a Father and Author of the Universe exists: but he does not mention his name, for he did not know it." Clement of Alexandria, not unjustly, represents the Gentiles as guilty of Atheism, and that twofold; first, "as they knew not him who is truly God;" and, secondly, as "they regarded those who are not, as though they were; and called those Gods, who, in reality, are not so."* Vossius, also, says with great elegance: "The same thing happened to them as to the blind man of whom we read in the Gospel of St John. When this man saw the Son of God, from whom he had received sight, he inquired, nevertheless, who was the Son of God: for he did not know that he whom he saw, was the person whom he saw; as if you should see the King; and not be aware that the man whom you see is the King. Almost all the Gentiles, in like manner, saw him who is invisible displaying himself in his works, and heard him declaring by expressive silence, that he is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that he demands and is entitled to our worship: But they shut their eyes against the sight, they stopped their ears against the voice; as if overpowered by a deep sleep, they imagined that he resembles those objects which daily presented themselves to their eyes; and, giving easy credit to their own dream, they adored the work instead of the Artificer, and

rendered divine honours, not to God, but to that which is not God. This was, certainly, to change lie truth into a lie."* The same writer expresses himself elsewhere in a manner equally excellent; and, although the passage is somewhat long, it illustrates the subject so well, that I shall not hesitate to quote it. It is as follows:† "Though we know something of God by nature, yet we do not know the true God but by divine revelation.... Nor let it be objected, that it is wrong to affirm that the Gentiles knew not the true God, since the Apostle himself says of them that they knew God. For, as Oedipus, when, as the Poets tell us, he knew that he had a father, was yet ignorant that Laius was his father; so the Gentiles, whilst they were enabled by the light of nature to know that there is one God, and that he is the Fountain of all good, knew not, however, who is that God. Hence, as the Apostle testifies, it was necessary that this UNKNOWN GOD should be declared unto them. The knowledge of God, then, is of two kinds; the one, simple, by which it is understood, in general, that there is a God, and that he is a wise, good, and powerful Being, the rewarder of righteousness, and the avenger of wickedness; the other, determinate, and applied to a certain object, namely, the God of Israel. The Gentiles, we admit, possessed the former, but they were destitute of the latter; for they imprisoned in falsehood and unrighteousness, those bright conceptions which they had of God, and ascribed them, not to the true, but to a false Deity. Hence, in many passages of Scripture, they are said not to have known God."

XXXI. Christian faith, on the contrary, being instructed by the doctrine of Christ, is acquainted with the name of God; and makes mention of that name, saying, "Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the earth." Faith recognises Divinity in God himself, and doth not ascribe his prerogatives to one who is not God. It doth not say, "JEHOVAH hath not done all this;" which would be to alienate from God the glory of his godhead, and of his works. Faith knows distinctly, that he alone is God, who manifested himself to our first parents in paradise, and afterwards, "at sundry times and in divers manners," to patriarchs and prophets; and at last condescended to make a visible appearance in the person

of the Son, clothed with human flesh. As he proclaims himself in his word, saying, "I, even I, am JEHOVAH, and besides me there is no Saviour;" so faith assents to this declaration, and replies, "Thou, even thou, art JEHOVAH alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host," &c. It belongs to the sincere Christian to say in truth, what was vauntingly said by Tryphon in Lucian, or the author, whoever he be, of the Dialogue entitled Philopatris: "Having discovered the Unknown God of Athens, we will adore him, and, with hands stretched forth towards heaven, render thanks to his name."

DISSERTATION II

ON FAITH IN GOD

I. IN the preceding Dissertation, we have shown what the Christian believes with respect to the existence of God. It must, by no means, however, be supposed, that this weighty expression, I BELIEVE IN GOD, includes nothing further. These words imply, without doubt, the whole exercise of the pious soul, who relies on God as her salvation; of which a more particular account must now be submitted to the consideration of our pupils. Faith in God, considered in its full extent, comprises, 1st, The knowledge and acknowledgment of those perfections of God, from which a sinner may derive salvation and happiness: 2dly, The desire of union and fellowship with Him who is at once blessed for ever, and the fountain of blessedness: 3dly, A cheerful acceptance of God as exhibiting himself for our salvation: 4thly, The soul's diligent self-investigation, to see whether it possesses the evidences of God's dwelling in it: 5thly, Unutterable joy arising from the consciousness of such evidences. 6thly, A holy solicitude of mind to walk worthy of God. We shall consider each of these in order.

II. Every one who employs himself assiduously in the contemplation of the Deity, will be able to discover, even by the light of nature, that God is the best, and the happiest of beings, and possessed of unbounded fulness and sufficiency; and that from this it follows, of necessity, that the chief good consists in his image and fellowship. Boethius has ingeniously demonstrated this truth, by philosophical arguments.* "It appears," says he, "from the universal conceptions of the minds of men, that God, who is the First and the Greatest[†] of all, is good; for, as nothing better than God can be imagined, who can doubt, that he, who is surpassed by none, is good? Reason, indeed, shows that God is not only good, but possessed of perfect goodness; for, unless he be so, he cannot be the greatest of all beings; but there will be something better than he, which, possessing perfect goodness, will appear to be superior and more excellent. Whatever is perfect, is unquestionably superior to that which falls short of perfection. Not to protract this reasoning beyond bounds,—it must be acknowledged that the Most High God possesses, in the amplest measure possible, the highest and most perfect goodness. Now we hold, that perfect goodness is true happiness; it necessarily follows, therefore, that true happiness resides in the Most High God." From these principles, he deduces the following conclusion: "Since men become happy by attaining happiness, and since Divinity itself is happiness, it is manifest that they become happy by attaining Divinity. But as by the acquisition of justice men become just, and by the acquisition of wisdom they become wise, so, by parity of reason, it unquestionably follows, that by the attainment of Divinity they become Gods. Every happy person, therefore, is a God. By nature, indeed, there is only one God; but, by participation, there is nothing to prevent the existence of a great number of Gods." Thus far Boethius; with whose last words, you may compare the expression of the Apostle Peter,—"that ye might be PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE."

III. But, however evident and certain this inference may be, and how impossible soever it is to deduce any conclusion, more just in itself, more strongly supported by arguments, or more worthy of God, very few of those who had nature alone for their guide seriously thought

of this truth. It may reasonably be doubted if these ideas would ever have occurred to Boethius himself, unless his philosophy had borrowed lights from a more spiritual teacher. Plato having defined the sum of happiness to be "the nearest possible resemblance to God,"* Clement of Alexandria, when quoting this expression, not unjustly questions, whether it is to be attributed to the sublimity of Plato's genius that he discovered a truth so congenial with the sacred doctrines of Christianity, or whether he did not rather derive it from some of those inspired writings which were then extant.† But, while this manifest truth was very imperfectly perceived by the minds of the heathen philosophers, they were equally ignorant with the most illiterate of the way by which communion with God may be obtained. The thoughts of the natural man are, in consequence, easily diverted from meditation on this truth; the will is not duly inclined to desire the Chief good; and the mind, weighed down by the power of the passions, at last becomes vain, and loses itself in the sublimity and subtlety of its own speculations; and, forgetting God, meanly grovels among corporeal, earthly, and transitory enjoyments.

IV. But Christian faith irradiates the mind with a more abundant light, and enables us to know, distinctly, the following truths relative to God. 1st, That he is "the blessed and the only Potentate," who finds in the possession, knowledge, and enjoyment of his own unbounded perfections, blessedness the most perfect, and most worthy of himself. 2dly, That he is infinitely able not merely to secure his own happiness, but also to communicate happiness to such of his rational creatures as he may deign to admit to fellowship with himself: for he is "the almighty (all-sufficient) God,"d and "all in all;" and "in his presence is fulness of joy,"f—joy which so completely fills and satisfies the soul, that it neither knows, nor wishes to know, any thing desirable besides him. 3dly, That the riches of the all-sufficiency of God are so great, that, what appears almost incredible, he can, and even will be, the God and the salvation of guilty and ruined men, in a manner fully consistent with his majesty, holiness, righteousness, veracity, and other perfections; so that the sinner is permitted to say and to sing, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for

him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." 4thly, That a salvation already purchased by the Son, and to be applied by the Spirit, is freely offered in the Gospel to all who desire it, and that God kindly and graciously invites men of every description to partake of it; crying with a loud voice, "Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else besides me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," 5thly, That a salvation so great is on no account to be neglected; but that, preferring it to every thing else, we must strive to become partakers of it; embracing with great alacrity and cordial delight, that God who graciously exhibits himself to us, and yielding ourselves to him in return, with ardent affection.j

V. All these truths are contained in the following words of the Apostle, Heb. 11:6.... "He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." In these expressions something nobler is exhibited, than any instructions which nature can impart to a sinner; for, 1st, TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS, is to give credit to the testimony, in which God has revealed his name and attributes, and the riches of his all-sufficiency. Faith is knowledge founded on the divine testimony; and since God, as revealed by himself in his word, is such and so great a God that he can be the salvation of a sinner, that man does not truly believe that GOD is, who does not believe the Gospel, when it ascribes to Jehovah this illustrious character, that he can justify the ungodly: for this is included in the representation which God has made of himself in his word. 2dly, It is possible, however, that God might be God, even though he were unwilling to become that, which, from his all-sufficiency, he can become, to wit, the God and the salvation of a sinner. Christian faith, therefore, proceeds further, and, agreeably to that divine declaration, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain," believes that God IS, in fact, THE REWARDER of those who diligently seek him. 3dly, Faith teaches, that this good ought to be earnestly SOUGHT, and that it is

incumbent on us to COME to him; which supposes that, on the part of God, there is a testimony which points out the way in which he is pleased to be sought, and to be approached unto by sinners. It must, by all means, be maintained, that a sinner cannot seek God, unless he seek, also, the righteousness of God, which, of necessity, must be declared in the salvation of a sinner; and that it doth not become a sinner to draw near to God without a priest, as without a priest he cannot approach with confidence. We read accordingly in Jeremiah, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD;"—for these words have a relation to the doctrine concerning Christ, and that satisfaction which he made to divine justice.

From these remarks it appears, that this passage of the Apostle's writings, is interpreted too loosely, by those who would have it to include nothing more, than that knowledge of God, which is taught by natural theology. Not to mention that this knowledge, of whatever sort it is, cannot with propriety be denominated faith; this natural faith, if we may be allowed to call it so, was never sufficient for salvation, and never enabled any man to please God.

VI. The distinct knowledge of those truths concerning God, which are embraced by Christian faith, excites in the mind a vehement DESIRE of God and of communion with him. It is not merely carried towards him for a short time by a kind of sudden impulse of affection, but enjoys no rest or tranquillity, till it become actually a partaker of that chief good, for which it fervently longs. The conscience, enlightened by faith, or, as the Psalmist speaks, the heart of the believer, discerning that perfection of beauty, and that assemblage of all possible excellencies, which are to be seen in the face of God, says in God's stead, "Seek ye my face." To this invitation, faith causes it immediately to answer, "Thy face, LORD, will I seek; O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Hence that holy wish which is opposed to the confused wishes of the men of the world: "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" But I say, "LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance

upon us." Hence the complaints of the soul which can find no rest, so long as she remains uncertain of her having fellowship with God, and which incessantly exclaims, What doth it avail me that there is a GOD, unless he be MY GOD? Hence the firm and resolute purpose of not ceasing to seek after God, until she find him as her God, and her exceeding joy.

VII. When, amidst this solicitude of the mind inquiring after God, the Deity graciously exhibits himself, saying, "Behold me, behold me;" faith, without delay, EMBRACES him with open arms. She "takes hold of his strength," (takes possession of the tower of his strength;) and, as the mariner, in a tempestuous sea, while in imminent danger of being swallowed up by the deep, no sooner finds some fragment of the shipwrecked vessel than he casts himself upon it with the whole weight of his body; so the soul, concerned for her own salvation, relies upon that God who offers himself in the Gospel, and falls, so to speak, with her whole force, into his arms and his bosom. God lifts up his voice in the Gospel, saying, Who is the man that is desirous of me, and of salvation in me? It is I, replies the believer. As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Behold me, then, replies God by the Spirit, able and willing to satisfy thy thirst. I accept of thee, rejoins the believer immediately; condescend thou then to be mine, let me be thine, and henceforth let none ever separate betwixt thee and me. This is to believe in God, so as cordially to receive him.

VIII. But the more excellent the good in question, and the more vehement the desire that is cherished for it, the believing soul becomes, in the same proportion, the more solicitous that it do not falsely and rashly claim it as its own. True faith in God, while it generates and promotes a well-founded confidence, detests and expels all temerity and arrogance. It does not teach a man to say boldly to God, on slight grounds, Thou art mine. It is by degrees, that it reaches this height; and it is after having accomplished a thorough search, that, at last, it forms this conclusion, which is the foundation of all comfort. The marks, by which the believer is persuaded that the

God in whom he believes, has become his own, are, principally, the following.

IX. 1st, This sincere desire of God, and of the most intimate union with him, is never found, but where God has begun to communicate himself, in a saving manner, to the soul. Unless he first draw near to the soul to enlighten it with the glorious beams of his reconciled countenance, and to draw it to himself with the cords of his preventing love, it can neither know, nor desire, nor seek him. The desire of the soul panting after communion with God is not felt, where communion with God is not already, in some degree, enjoyed. Hence David joins these together, saying, "O God, thou art MY GOD, early will I seek thee." The man who so earnestly seeks God that he regards all other things, in comparison of him, as nothing better than dung, gives evidence that he is already apprehended of God.^v He does not run, till he is drawn. He does not love, till he is loved.^x

X. 2dly, When God communicates himself to the soul, he not only makes it happy, but also holy. He communicates himself in a manner suitable to his real character: But he is the Holy One, and he is the LORD that sanctifieth Israel. He puts his law in the minds of his people, and writes it on the hearts of those whose God he is;^a and he gives them one heart and one way, that they may fear him for ever. Whilst he is pleased to become the Portion of his people,^c he still remains their Lord. The more intimate the fellowship with himself to which he condescends to admit them, the stronger, in proportion, are the obligations under which they are laid, reverently to adore his majesty, carefully to imitate his holiness, humbly to proclaim his goodness, and assiduously to cultivate his friendship. Nay, as, in the beginning, the Spirit of God, by moving on the face of the waters, rendered them wonderfully productive of life; so, when God takes up his residence in the soul, he makes it a partaker of his own life. The old and natural life of the soul is now gradually absorbed by the more excellent life of God; and it is not so much the man himself that lives, as God that lives in him. This communication of vital holiness, is so inseparably connected with fellowship with God, that no man can

truly glory, or sincerely exult in the latter, unless he is, at the same time, adorned with the former; and when the holiness of believers declines, the full assurance of their communion with God never fails at the same time to be impaired.e

XI. 3dly, They who have JEHOVAH for their God, cannot bear his absence with indifference. When he hides his face from them, and withholds those gracious influences, which produce a happy serenity of mind, and an alacrity and vigour in the various exercises of the spiritual life, they are so troubled that their soul in a manner fails, they are sick of love,g and can receive no consolation until he return. This sorrow arises, if not from the sense and experience of former enjoyment, at least from a great esteem for familiar intercourse with God. None but one that has enjoyed this privilege, can form a just estimate of its value. Even those who are strangers to God can feel a kind of sorrow for their sins; but none excepting the children of the bride-chamber lament the absence of the Bridegroom.i

XII. 4thly, Those whom God has blessed with a special interest in himself, are often employed in devout and affectionate meditation upon him. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. Accordingly they who gloried in God as their own God, have unanimously protested, that they thought of nothing with greater pleasure than of Him. The spouse rejoiced that her Beloved was her's;k but she added, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." David struck his harp and said, "The LORD is the Portion of my inheritance and of my cup;" but he added, "I have set the LORD always before me." "My mind," says the pious Augustine,* "is devoted to thee, inflamed with love to thee, breathing for thee, panting after thee, desiring to see thee, alone. It accounts nothing delightful but to speak of thee, to hear of thee, to write of thee, to converse about thee, and often to revolve thy glory in my heart; that the sweet remembrance of thee, may afford me some respite and refreshment amidst these calamities. Upon thee, therefore, do I call, O thou most beloved of all objects; to thee I cry aloud with my whole heart. When I call upon

thee, too, I call upon thee as a God dwelling in myself; for unless thou wert in me, I could not exist at all. Surely, thou art in me, for thou abidest in my memory; by this I recognise thee, and in this I find thee, since I have thee in remembrance, and in thee, and from thee, enjoy my supreme delight."

From these and similar evidences, it is possible for the believer to attain assurance, that God has become his own God.

XIII. When the soul knows this for certain, especially if she hear it from the mouth of God himself addressing her inwardly by the Spirit, and actually taste something of the Divine sweetness, she is filled with a great, an incredible JOY. Hence Peter says, "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Hence that sweet song of a soul rejoicing in God as her own: "The LORD is the Portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth." In another Psalm also, the two following expressions are conjoined, as if by the same stroke of the harp:—"God, my exceeding joy," and,— "O God, my God."q

XIV. This joy, indeed, is not to be wondered at; for when any one knows that God is his own, he finds in Him the most powerful protection against all evil. "In the LORD JEHOVAH, is everlasting strength," (the Rock of ages.) "I will say of the LORD, he is my refuge, and my fortress, MY GOD; in him will I trust." He finds in him, also, an inexhaustible fountain of all desirable good; not only what equals, but also what infinitely transcends his conceptions and desires. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light." Both of these ideas are briefly, but strikingly, united, in the words of God to Abraham, "I am thy SHIELD, and thy exceeding great REWARD;" and in the

following expression of the Psalmist, "For the LORD God is a SUN and a SHIELD."

XV. The representation and enjoyment of so great a good, cannot fail to be delightful in the highest degree. If separate goods are pleasant, how delightful is that good, which contains the sweetness and quintessence of every good; and not merely such sweetness as we have experienced in created objects, but as widely different from these, as the Creator differs from the creature! All the beauty, all the glory, and all the joy of the material world, are nothing but resplendent beams, emitted and diffused around, by the King of beauty, of glory, and of joy. Whatever things were made, were made by him; and, therefore, whatever goodness is found in the creatures, could be derived from him alone, by whom all were made. The borrowed goodness, consequently, of which they are possessed, is darkened and eclipsed, when compared with that uncreated goodness which is its spring and original. God is, doubtless, a Being, in whose light alone, all that is luminous—in whose glory alone, all that is glorious—in whose beauty alone, all that is beautiful—in whose joy alone, all that is joyful, is contained. When he bestowed upon the creatures light, glory, beauty, and joy, he reserved to himself, the source of light, glory, beauty, and joy; and thus he always retained within himself as the fountain, more than he communicated from himself to the creatures. Ought not, then, the possession of so boundless a good, to produce an almost boundless joy?

XVI. Further, the sweetness arising from the gracious communication which God makes of himself, is so great, that it has virtue to sweeten all that is bitter in the bitterest calamities. The smallest drop of this sweetness, distilled into the mouth which pants after it, quickly dispels the greatest sorrows. This rendered torrents of stones pleasant to Stephen, the cross to Andrew, the violent tearing of the skin to Bartholomew, the gridiron to St Laurentius, rods, racks,* wheels, and flames, not to mention prisons and exile, to so many myriads of holy martyrs of Christ; who, having tasted this

sweetness of God, rejoiced and sang when they were led forth to the most dreadful tortures, as if they were conducted to the most splendid entertainments. These things, indeed, seem incredible to the world. But such is the nature of this sweetness of our God, that none can understand it in any other way than by tasting it. Those only who eat of this manna, can conceive how delicious it is.

XVII. In whatever measure, too, this blessedness is imparted to man in the present life, it is nothing more than the first fruits and earnest of greater, and everlasting enjoyment. Hence arises the constancy and permanence of this joy, if not with regard to its effects, and what are called its secondary acts, at least with regard to its foundation and its primary act. "Everlasting joy shall be upon their head;" "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."x Though, agreeably to the dictates of his infinite wisdom, God is pleased, in this life, to temper the communication of his sweetness with a mixture of bitterness, often very large, but always salutary; there is a principle abiding in believers, which soon gives rise to renewed emotions of joy, and ultimately proves a most abundant source of never-ending delight.

XVIII. Nor has any one cause to be afraid lest he should err by indulging this joy to excess; for God himself invites us not only to cheerfulness, but even to a certain holy and mystic ebriety. The more liberally a person has drunk of this spiritual nectar, though he may seem to others that are ignorant of these delights to be beside himself, he is, in reality, at once the happier and the wiser. There are spirits in material wine, which serve to exhilarate the animal spirits of the human body; but when it is too copiously drunk, it disorders the brain, and makes wise men mad. This spiritual wine, however, which is wholly spirit, and spirit in the very height and exuberance of spirituality, and which is newly extracted and imbibed from the first and greatest Spirit,—with what mighty force, and with how surprising an ecstasy does it seize and ravish the soul! Yet it produces no agitation but what is salutary, consistent with discretion, and conducive to holiness; it enables the man, no longer his own master,

but full of his God, and on the confines of heaven, both to think and to speak with a dignity and energy more than human. Oftener than once, I recollect, I have observed this, with astonishment, in persons whose minds were, in other respects, endowed with very ordinary faculties. Such is the spiritual and mystical joy of Christian faith, when exulting in God as her own.

XIX. This same faith in God is also the spring of true HOLINESS. It cannot be denied, that even that persuasion of a Deity which the Gentiles derived from nature, was calculated to produce a certain attention to repentance and virtue. Epictetus, in his meditations upon this subject, almost rises above heathenism, when he expresses himself in the following terms:* "It is requisite, first, to learn that GOD IS,—that his providence extends to all, and that it is impossible to conceal from his penetrating eye, not merely external actions, but even the thoughts and emotions of the mind. What sort of nature and character, then, have the Gods? Whatever perfections they are found to possess, it is necessary for the man who is desirous to please and obey them, to exert his endeavours to resemble them as closely as possible. If the Deity is faithful, he, too, must be faithful; if free, he, also, must be free; if beneficent, he must be beneficent; if magnanimous, he must be magnanimous. In short, it is incumbent upon him, in all other respects, to think and to speak as an imitator of God." Thus the persuasion of a Deity is the mother of probity.

XX. These expressions, indeed, are equally beautiful and just. But the truth which they inculcate was known to very few; and, in those who knew it, was so enchained by the fetters of corrupt propensities, that it was far from elevating the character, or governing the conduct. Hence the Apostle overthrows their pretensions by the following sentence, as by a thunderbolt: "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." God caused some of his rays to shine upon them, and, accordingly, they are said to have known God: but they did not admit those rays to the secret recesses of the heart; which is, therefore, said to be darkened. "In the

wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God." The fabric of nature displayed the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Most High, and thus called on mankind to serve him with fidelity, both on account of his supreme majesty, and his numberless benefits; and also because a blessed and glorious reward is reserved for his worshippers in a future state of existence. But the world chose rather to amuse themselves with idle speculations and frigid discourses respecting the works of God, while, in the mean time, they rendered no homage to their great Author. Even those who were possessed of more sagacity and penetration than others, did not betake themselves to the true God, to whom they ought to have resorted, but had recourse to the creature, in common with the populace—against whom, however, these distinguished masters of wisdom, whenever a convenient opportunity occurred, loudly exclaimed, as in this respect acting the part of madmen.

XXI. A Christian faith in God, on the contrary, does not suffer a man to continue destitute of true piety and holiness. The truth of this assertion may be illustrated in various ways. 1st, While faith elevates the mind to the contemplation of the ever adorable Deity, and holds it fixed in delightful meditation upon him, the mind is insensibly transformed into the image of the divine holiness. After Moses had remained forty days on the holy mount, enjoying familiar intercourse with God, the skin of his face shone with so bright an effulgence, that the eyes of the Israelites were unable to endure the sight of him.^b The same, in a spiritual sense, is the attainment of those who frequently and attentively contemplate God in the light of faith. The beams of celestial influence, flowing in abundance from the Father of lights, and received by faith, penetrate and pervade the innermost parts of the soul, and adorn them with a new lustre of celestial purity. The more frequently the believer beholds him in the spirit, his knowledge of his perfections, of which holiness is the ornament, becomes the more clear. The more clearly he knows the divine perfections, the more ardently does he love them. The more ardently he loves them, the more solicitous doth he become increasingly to resemble them; for love naturally leads to a resemblance to the

object beloved. The more ardently he loves God, too, he contemplates him the more frequently, and with the greater attention and pleasure: and, whilst he is engaged in performing this endless circuit of contemplation and affection, he obtains, at every repetition of the exercise, some fresh lineament of God's glorious image.

XXII. 2dly, When faith considers the unspotted purity of God, she readily concludes that she must exert her endeavours also to attain eminent holiness, if she wishes to possess, to cultivate, and to retain such communion with God as will prove effectually conducive to her joy. She assents to the voice of reason suggesting this truth. She gives credit to the sacred volume teaching it still more expressly; "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him:"—and to the Lord himself crying aloud in her ears, "Be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you."d She learns, also, by experience, that she no sooner relaxes her ardour in the pursuit of piety, than the joy of fellowship with God is immediately impaired. But since faith prizes this joy above every thing else, it cannot fail powerfully to stimulate her to a certain distinguished sanctity of life; as she is well assured that, without this, she can neither attain nor preserve that communion with God, which she so earnestly desires.

XXIII. 3dly, That stupendous love of God, by which he gives himself to the soul for its salvation, when it is apprehended by faith, and represented to the believer in its true light,—kindles surprising flames of reciprocal love. No one, I may venture to affirm, truly believes that God has become his own God, who, whilst he believes, is not swallowed up with amazement at that abyss of divine love, and doth not sincerely wish that he had a far more capacious soul, that it might be entirely replenished with the love of God,—who so greatly loves, and is so greatly loved. In believers themselves, I am aware, that fervent and unbounded love, with which they are required to love their God, sometimes languishes. But on such occasions, their faith towards God as their own God, is either scarcely present, or not lively, or not called forth into exercise. When this faith is at once

present and vigorously exercised, it dictates to the man a song of love not unlike the following, in which Augustine adored his God:* "I love thee, O my God, and I desire always to love thee more; for thou art truly sweeter than all honey, more nourishing than all milk, and brighter than all light. Thou art dearer to me than all gold, and silver, and precious stones. O my Love, whose heart is ever warm, and never waxes cold, be pleased to inflame me. O let me be entirely inflamed by thee, that I may entirely love thee; for if one love any other object together with thee, which he does not love for thy sake, he loves thee the less. May I love thee, O Lord, since thou hast first loved me!"

XXIV. 4thly, Whoever truly believes that he is now become a partaker of God, as he cannot be his own, so cannot wish to be his own; but, did he possess any thing more valuable than himself, he would give it up to his God. Far from desiring to reserve any thing to himself instead of employing it in the service of God, he is truly grieved because he himself is not better, and more worthy of being surrendered to the Lord. On this topic, nothing can be conceived more elegant and forcible, than the following expressions of Bernard, in his treatise on loving God,* which I cannot help quoting. "If," says he, "I owe my whole self for my creation, what can I add for my renovation by means so astonishing? I have not been renewed so easily as I was made. God made me, by merely speaking a single word; in renewing me, he has not only spoken much, but endured many grievous and ignominious sufferings. In the first work he gave ME to myself; in the second he GAVE HIMSELF; and when he thus GAVE HIMSELF, he RESTORED ME to myself. Having, then, been both GIVEN and RESTORED, I owe MYSELF,—I doubly owe MYSELF for MYSELF. What shall I render to God for HIMSELF? for though I were able to render MYSELF a thousand times, what am I in the presence of GOD!" Christian faith in God teaches a man thus to reason, and thus to stir up his soul.

XXV. We remark, in conclusion, that what has been said must not be understood to intimate, that no person in whom all the attainments

of which we have now spoken, and these in the degree which we have delineated, are not found, can say in sincerity, I BELIEVE IN GOD. We have described "believing in God," not as it subsists in Christians that are weak and "of little faith," but as it may be conceived, and as it is sometimes seen in those to whom the Lord has imparted a richer measure of his Spirit. It is proper in this manner to propose faith in God to ourselves, not that we may fall into despair, or be unduly discouraged, when we cannot discern some parts of the description in ourselves; but that captivated with its beauty and excellence, we may cultivate, with all possible zeal and activity, the small beginnings which we have, till we gradually reach that full assurance of faith, which produces so many excellent fruits. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. AMEN.

DISSERTATION III

ON FAITH IN A THREE-ONE GOD

I. THE Creed is usually divided into three parts; of which the first relates to GOD THE FATHER, and the work of CREATION; the second to GOD THE SON, and the work of REDEMPTION; the third to GOD THE HOLY GHOST, and the work of SANCTIFICATION. The most ancient formulary having consisted of a simple profession of the Trinity, our present Creed, which took its rise from that formulary, and in course of time was completed by the addition of various articles, is still so framed that these may all be referred to the Three Persons in the Godhead. This great doctrine remained as the Foundation of foundations, upon which the other articles were built.

II. When, however, his own distinct actions are ascribed to each of the Persons respectively, this must not be understood to intimate that either the power or the operation of the Persons is divided, or that any one of them accomplishes his work more immediately than another. As God is one, so the power and operation of all the Persons are one and undivided; and each person is the immediate and perfect of the whole work. The Son and the Holy Ghost created the world by the same power, and by the same act, with the Father. The manner of those works which respect our redemption, is, nevertheless, somewhat different. As a participation of the human nature was requisite to the performance of these, and as the Son alone assumed this nature into personal union with himself, these works, being the works of the God-man, are peculiar to the Son. Yet it is admitted that in so far as the Godhead was concerned, they are the works of the whole Trinity; and, accordingly, they are, in this view, attributed to the Father and the Holy Spirit equally with the Son.—To the Father: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works."—To the Holy Spirit: "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God."^b The incarnation itself, and similar acts, though peculiar to the Son in respect that they terminate upon him only, are nevertheless, in regard to the agency by which they are effected, the works of the whole Trinity.

III. But this distinction of the Divine works, has a respect, 1st, To the order of the Persons, which ought to be observed in their operation, as well as their subsistence. Thus, because the Father is the First person of the Godhead, and creation is the first external work of the Deity, as it is the beginning of all those things that are without God,* it is justly ascribed, by special economy, to the Father, who, on this account, is called "Lord of heaven and earth."^d Yet the agency of the Son, and the Holy Ghost,^f is not excluded from this work. 2dly, It is necessary, also, to attend to the terminating of an act upon some certain Person. For this reason, redemption is attributed to the Second person, for whom alone the human nature was prepared, in and by which the Godhead performed many acts relating to our

salvation. The Father, however, is said to have "reconciled the world to himself,"^h and to have "made peace by the blood of the cross of Christ:" and we "are washed, sanctified, and justified, by the Spirit of our God."^j Paul, in like manner, says of the living God, essentially considered, that he is "the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe."³ Some add that the distinction of the Divine works has a respect to the proximate and immediate principle of operation, and that, in this view, our sanctification should be ascribed to the Holy Ghost.^l We may be permitted, however, to call in question the solidity of this sentiment; for one Divine person doth not act by another, as an intermediate cause; and, as the power of all the persons is one and the same, each of them accomplishes an effect by the same immediate operation. A holy God, essentially considered, is the sanctifier of Israel. The Father and the Son perform this work not less immediately than the Spirit; for the power and the operation of all the three are the same. If, indeed, the order of operation amongst the persons be considered, the Father acts by the Son and the Holy Ghost. But, in this sense, all the works of God ought to be characterised as the immediate works of the Holy Ghost. This, however, is foreign to the purpose; for the Father acts no less immediately by the Son, than the Son himself acts; and the Father and the Son act no less immediately by the Holy Spirit, than the Holy Spirit himself acts. It is only where there is a diversity of essences and of operations, that the distinction betwixt a remote and a proximate, or betwixt a mediate and an immediate cause, can have any place.* Why, then, is sanctification so uniformly ascribed to the third person? No reason occurs to me, at present, more satisfactory than the following. The sanctification of a sinner is the consequence of the grace and the merits of Christ:³⁰ in the order of subsistence and operation amongst the three Divine persons, the Holy Spirit follows the Son, and hence he is called "the Spirit of the Son:" it appears, therefore, that the application of the merits of the Son, cannot be more properly attributed to any of the persons, than to him who is next the Son, who is sent by him, and who applies those blessings only, which belong to the Son, and which he receives from him.^o

IV. It is of importance to examine this mystery more distinctly. I shall not now explain the terms made use of by the Church on this subject, which Gomar, according to his usual manner,[†] has treated accurately, and John Gerhard more copiously. ‡ Nor shall I scholastically define what is intended by essence, existence, suppositum, and person. Such definitions may be learned from those systems which are in every one's hand. I shall only state, with great simplicity, and in a manner adapted to the weakest capacities, what we ought to know and believe respecting this tremendous mystery. The true God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, and the salvation of his chosen people, is one only,* according to the most absolute unity.p But, in perfect consistency with this unity, there are three Hypostases, or Persons distinct from one another; each of whom is the only true God, and who have the same common form,[†] nature,[‡] or essence:§ for, "according to the holy Fathers, essence, and nature, and form are synonymous terms."|| These three are the FATHER, the WORD or SON, and the HOLY GHOST; who are not three Gods, nor merely three names, or attributes, or powers of God; but three distinct Persons in one individual Godhead. It is sufficient for salvation to know what has just been stated, though one remain ignorant of the subtle refinements of the schools, which are often bold, and really presumptuous and unadvised.

V. This doctrine belongs to the number of those mysteries of our religion, which man, particularly in his corrupt state, cannot learn from nature alone, and of which Justin Martyr beautifully says: "They surpass all the understanding, all the language, in short, all the comprehension of a created nature. If, therefore, amidst your inquiries into them, any doubt arise in your mind, avail yourself of that which affords a ready solution of your doubts respecting the subject of inquiry, to wit, faith."* Christ himself says in reference to this mystery, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."q It is, therefore, only by the revelation of the Son, that the relation which exists between him and the Father is known. On this account, we cannot subscribe to the opinion of such

of our theologians as have endeavoured to prove, to confirm, and by tedious similitudes to illustrate this mystery, by arguments derived from nature; which, after others, Bisterfeld has acutely and copiously attempted, in the Synopsis prefixed to his learned work against Crellius. It is much safer to keep within the bounds of Scripture alone, lest we involve ourselves in unnecessary difficulties. The testimonies produced from Orpheus, Zoroaster, Trismegistus, the Sibyls, and similar writers, are not genuine; and the clearer they are, they are the more to be suspected. It seems contrary to the sacred oracles, as Casaubon well argues, † to imagine, that mysteries so profound were more clearly propounded to the Heathen, than to that people whom God Almighty was pleased to favour as peculiarly his own, and to instruct, by his own immediate voice, and by that of his faithful servants. The passages produced from Plato and his disciples, whilst they tally with this doctrine in words, differ from it in sense, and may be considered as borrowed either from the sacred writings which were then extant, or from tradition; the probability of which has been shown by Clement of Alexandria.*

VI. The Scriptures of the Old Testament, as well as of the New, abound with clear and striking testimonies respecting this mystery. It appears from both, 1st, That there are more Divine Persons than one; 2dly, More particularly, that they are three in number; 3dly, Still more particularly, that they are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The first of these assertions is proved, 1. From those passages of Scripture where God either addresses himself, or speaks concerning himself, in the plural number; such as those quoted at the bottom of the page. 2. From those passages in which the LORD speaks of the LORD, or is distinguished from the LORD.

The second assertion is confirmed by the places of Scripture where three distinct persons are mentioned.

The third is proved from Mat. 28:19. Rom. 1:4. 2 Cor. 13:14. 1 John 5:7.

To explain and vindicate all these testimonies might seem somewhat tedious, and it is foreign to our present design.

VII. We have undertaken to show what it is to believe in a Three-one God. This implies, principally, three things. 1st, The knowledge of this mystery. 2dly, The acknowledgment of it, or an assent to it. 3dly, The calm and holy dependance of the soul upon God as a Three-one God.

VIII. With regard to the KNOWLEDGE of this mystery, we deem it so necessary, that we cannot venture to assure any adult of salvation, without this knowledge. A distinction should be made, we allow, betwixt the degrees of knowledge, as more or less clear and distinct;—times, also, must be distinguished, for it is fit that knowledge should correspond with the measure of revelation afforded;—the different capacities of men should be distinguished, since some are far more capable of instruction than others;—knowledge existing in the mind, too, must be distinguished from the expression of it with the mouth;—we ought to take into consideration, in fine, the diversity of the ministry under which individuals live. We do not presume to determine the degree or measure of the knowledge required. This only we state, that it does not appear to us, that the man who is entirely ignorant of this mystery is in the way of salvation. The following arguments tend to confirm this opinion.

IX. 1st, Since our Lord himself makes eternal life to consist in the knowledge of the Father, and of the Son whom he hath sent, who will say that such knowledge is not necessary to eternal life? This would be equally absurd as if one should affirm, that that in which salvation itself consists, is not necessary to salvation. No one, it must also be remarked, knows the Father, who is ignorant that from eternity he had an only-begotten Son; nor does any one know the Son, who does not know He is the same God with the Father. "Jesus saith unto him,

Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.... Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" These words import a Trinity, at least a plurality, of persons in one godhead.

X. 2dly, It is admitted, that there is no hope of salvation without the knowledge of the true God. But he only is the true God, who, while he is One in essence, subsists in Three persons. Whoever entertains any other view of God than this, does not represent to himself the true God, but a figment of his own imagination, and an idol. "Whoever," says Augustine, "thinks that God is such a being as he is not, entertains a conception, in reality, of another and a false God."* On this account, the heathen, who knew in general that there is some infinite Deity, but were ignorant of the Trinity, which is the foundation of the covenant of God with elect sinners, are said to have been "without God in the world."^w The true God, whom Paul preached, was to them UNKNOWN. "The Gentiles," it is said, "knew not God;"^y that is, they did not know him as a Tri-une God. They knew, indeed, that there is some Supreme Being; and thus far, the same Apostle affirms that "they knew God;" but they were ignorant of what God is; as if one should know there is a certain King in the realm, but be unacquainted with the person of the King.

XI. 3dly, When the Trinity is not known, the necessary consequence is, that the principal foundations of our faith and comfort, are unknown. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, are hid in the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.^a I cannot know how God can show mercy to a sinner in a manner worthy of himself, unless I know he has a Son whom he could send to make satisfaction for sin, and a Spirit who can apply to me the merits of the Son. If I know not that the Father is God, I shall be ignorant that I am a Son of God,—which is the sum of our felicity. If I know not that the Son is God, I shall not form a right estimate of the love of the Father who has given him to me, nor of the grace of the Son, who, though possessing inconceivable majesty, humbled himself so wonderfully for my sake;—nor shall I be able to place a firm dependance upon his

satisfaction, which could not be sufficient unless it were of infinite value, or to rely securely on his power, which cannot save me unless it be evidently omnipotent;—it will be impossible for me, in short, to regard him as my Saviour and my Chief Good, because none excepting the true God of Israel is Israel's GOD and Redeemer. If, in fine, I am not sure that the Holy Spirit, to whose direction and government I ought to commit myself, is God, I shall not be able to esteem my subjection to him as true liberty, to maintain a holy acquiescence in his protecting care, or to rely on his testimony respecting my salvation as a most ample security. Christian faith is of so delicate a character, that it can firmly acquiesce in none but the Most High God. It must, then, be of the first importance and necessity for us to know a doctrine, on which the knowledge of so many necessary points depends. This argument is confirmed by experience; for, as we see in the Socinians, the same men who deny the Trinity, deny, also, the satisfaction of Christ, the invincible power of the Spirit in our regeneration and conservation, the certainty of salvation, and the full assurance of faith. The mystery of our salvation through Christ is so intimately connected with the mystery of the Trinity, that when the latter is unknown or denied, the former cannot be known or acknowledged.

XII. 4thly, It is indisputably manifest, that he who does not honour God the Father cannot be saved; for his own words are as follows: "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." No one, however, rightly honours the Father, who does not, also, honour the Son. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."d Further, no man can honour the Son who does not know him, and who does not know him even in his true character as the Only-begotten, of the same substance with the Father, and, therefore, worthy of the same divine honour with the Father. For what is honour but a reverential acknowledgment of the excellency possessed by the person whom we honour? It follows,

then, that without the knowledge of Christ as one God with the Father, there is no salvation.

XIII. 5thly, It is necessary to salvation, to know him of whom all that are about to be baptized according to Christ's appointment, ought to make a profession. No one can profess what he does not know. But ever since the commencement of the Christian dispensation, it has been incumbent on believers to make a profession of that Trinity, into whose name they are baptized. To be baptized into the name of any one, is to surrender ourselves to him, in order to yield him such homage as is due to God. It, therefore, involves or supposes a confession of his Divinity. It is not, indeed, expressly mentioned in Scripture, that a confession to this effect was demanded in these very terms. But neither is it explicitly affirmed, that the Apostles baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: yet, without doubt, they observed the institution of our Lord with the most scrupulous exactness. When the Apostles, too, baptized in the name of Christ, which Luke, in his account of their labours, testifies that they did; the whole Trinity, as Ambrose ingeniously observes,* is intended by that name: for when Christ, that is, the Anointed, is mentioned, the expression includes the Father, by whom he was anointed; Christ himself, who received the anointing; and the Holy Ghost, the oil with which he was anointed. In this remark Ambrose has followed Basil, whose words are these: "The naming of Christ is the confession of the whole; for this word denotes, at once, him who anoints, viz. God; the Anointed, viz. the Son; and the unction, viz. the Spirit." † Besides, when our Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,"^f what is more consonant to reason than that the object of faith to which he referred was that very doctrine which is delivered at baptism? Hence all the ancients, with hardly any exception, made a solemn recognition of the Trinity at the administration of baptism. "You were asked," says Ambrose,* "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty? You replied, I believe; and you were immersed, that is, you were buried. You were asked, in the second place, Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ? You said, I believe; and you were

immersed, and thus buried together with Christ.... You were asked, in the third place, Do you believe in the Holy Ghost? You answered, I believe; you were immersed³³ a third time, &c." "We ought," says Basil, to be baptized as we have learned, to believe as we have been baptized, and to honour the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as we have believed." See several other testimonies of the Fathers in Forbes;[†] to which I here add the expressions of Nazianzen in the speech which he delivered in the Council of Constantinople, the 6th General Council, held in the year of our Lord 381. "We believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of the same substance and the same glory; in whom, also, baptism has its perfection: for in baptism, AS THOU WHO ART INITIATED KNOWEST, there is both in word and deed, a renunciation of atheism and a confession of the Deity."[‡] Thus it appears that the pious ancients believed, that when a man makes a profession of the Trinity in baptism, he passes from atheism to an acknowledgment of the true God.

XIV. It will not be unseasonable here to inquire, WHETHER THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY WAS KNOWN TO ADAM IN THE STATE OF INNOCENCE? Moses Amyrault, a celebrated divine, has thought proper to deny this, and to contend,* that the economy which takes place among the Three persons of the Godhead, so peculiarly respects the redemption of mankind, that "the knowledge of it cannot pertain to the state of innocence, in which there was no place for salvation or redemption." To us the matter appears in a different light; and we will explain and confirm our opinion by the following arguments.

XV. The doctrine of the Trinity, we confess, is a mystery, which man, how distinguished soever for wisdom and industry, could not discover by the mere consideration of himself and the creatures. We hold it, however, as unquestionably certain, that God revealed several truths to Adam in his original state of integrity, which unassisted nature was incapable of teaching him. Being the confederate, the friend, and a kind of vicegerent of the great God upon earth, it was essential to his happiness to enjoy communion

with his God, and from time to time to receive such instruction from his lips as might serve to prepare him more thoroughly for rendering praise to his Creator. Whence, indeed, did he receive the command respecting the tree of knowledge; whence did he learn the signification of the tree of life,—if not by Divine revelation? How else, did he so well know the manner of the creation of his wife, though formed while he was asleep, as to declare that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh?

Zanchius says,[†] he has no doubt that God sometimes spoke to Adam, in an external and visible form, by his own Son, clothed with the appearance of a human body. To him it appears altogether improbable, that this privilege which God afterwards granted to a considerable number of men was withheld from the first man, who was the chief friend of God, and created in his perfect image. He affirms, too, that this was the opinion of the Fathers, of Justin, Irenæus, Tertullian, Eusebius, Ambrose, Augustine, and others. For my part, as I dare not determine any thing respecting the mode of revelation, beyond what is related in sacred writ, so I am persuaded that, from the instances which we have adduced, it cannot be questioned that several revelations were, in reality, made to Adam.

XVI. That the mystery of the Trinity was included amongst the subjects of divine revelation to our first father, may be proved thus. It is universally admitted, that the understanding of Adam was adorned with the most excellent wisdom. Now it is the principal branch of wisdom, to know God: Not, however, to know him in so general and indistinct a manner that one understands there is some Infinite Deity, from whom all other beings derive their existence; for such knowledge remained among the heathen, who, we all know, were blind and foolish, and destitute of the divine image. It is essential to a true knowledge of God, that you know distinctly WHAT he is. If you apply those general notions which you have of a Deity to any other than to Him, who, while he is One in essence, subsists in Three persons, you must be considered, not as possessing the knowledge of the true God, but rather as substituting an idol, and a

figment of your own imagination, in the place of the true God. But, since it is incongruous and almost blasphemous to impute this to Adam in his state of innocence, we must conclude that he had some knowledge of a Three-one God, who alone is the true God. Epiphanius,* in the following expressions concerning Adam, employs the same argument: "He was not an idolater, but knew God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; for he was a prophet, and knew that the Father said to the Son, Let us make man." We are here taught by this writer, first, that revelations of a prophetic sort were given to Adam; and, then, that the mystery of the Trinity was one of the points revealed to him: which he proves by this consideration, that he was no idolater. He manifestly supposes, that he would have been an idolater, if he had entertained any other conception of the Almighty, than as a Three-one God.

XVII. In these words, too, Epiphanius suggests another argument, which we shall more fully illustrate. In the work of creation God evidently showed himself a Three-one God; for the Father made the worlds by the Son; the Holy Spirit moved upon the waters, and thus rendered them prolific; and the whole Trinity, by mutual excitation, prepared for the creation of man. It is incredible, therefore, that the Trinity was utterly unknown to the first man; unless we can suppose him to have been ignorant of his Creator. Since both the Son and the Holy Spirit created him, he could not have been ignorant of these Divine persons, without being ignorant of his Creator, and unable to praise or adore him aright. Truly it is not without emphasis and meaning, that in a considerable number of passages in which the Scripture speaks of the Creator of man, it makes use of the plural number. Thus where we read, "Thy Maker is thy Husband," the words in the original literally signify, "Thy Makers are thy Husbands." Again, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him;" literally, "in his Makers." Man is enjoined to attend to this, and even in early years, to engrave it on his mind; "Remember, now, thy Creator, Creators, in the days of thy youth." It is represented as criminal in man to neglect this, and not to say, "Where is God my "Maker, Makers, who giveth songs in the night?" Unless these

expressions be referred to the Trinity, they might seem dangerous. It is absurd, too, to think that Adam was ignorant of a truth respecting his Creator, (I say Creator, because this is the character now pressed on our attention,) about which his posterity are not permitted to be ignorant. The absurdity is the more apparent, when it is considered that God created man to be a herald to proclaim himself and his attributes in the new-formed world; for unquestionably it tends to the glory of God, that man should particularly celebrate not only the Divine perfections, but also the manner in which these perfections are displayed in the distinct Persons of the Godhead, and in the mode and order of their operation.

XVIII. Hence it appears that the economy of the Trinity ought not to be so restricted to the plan of the redemption of mankind, as not to be observed in the first creation of the world and of man. The Gospel itself, while it unfolds this admirable economy as it respects the method of our salvation, leads back our thoughts at the same time to that economy, as it was discovered in the first formation of the world. It shows us, that in the old creation there was a certain type and figure of the new; and that the Son of God our Saviour is "the Beginning" (viz. in the active sense of the term) "of the creation of God;"m by whom were made thrones, and dominions, things visible and invisible, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;" that is, that he might hold the pre-eminence as well in the works of nature, as in those of grace. It is, therefore, wrong to conclude that Adam had no knowledge of the Trinity, from, the supposition that the economy of the Trinity is principally concerned in the work of redeeming sinners; since this work of redemption, which is a new creation, was shadowed forth by the first creation, in which the economy of the Three persons no less manifested itself.³⁴

XIX. It is rashly asserted, too, "that in the state of innocence there was no room for salvation* or redemption." This, indeed, is true with regard to redemption, but with respect to salvation, it is false. The same salvation, the same eternal life, which we obtain through Christ, (as we have shown at large elsewhere,) was promised to

Adam upon condition of his persisting in holiness. We have an evidence of this in the tree of life, which was, then, a symbol, though not of the Mediator as such, yet of the Son of God; for "In him was life."o This symbol would have been nugatory, if its meaning had been unknown to Adam.

XX. Thus far respecting the KNOWLEDGE of this mystery. An ASSENT to the doctrine, and an ACKNOWLEDGMENT of it, after it has been explained to one from the word of God, are no less necessary. The condition of one who denies and impugns a fundamental truth which he knows, is evidently far worse than that of one who is simply ignorant of it. They who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity, I do not hesitate to declare with confidence, have no part in eternal salvation. The Apostle John expressly warns us, that "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Now, that man denies the Son, who denies his Divinity, and who denies the Spirit of the Son,—who is of the same substance with the Son, and, without whom, no man can say that Jesus is Lord.q

XXI. When, therefore, men deny, oppose, and blaspheme the doctrine of the Trinity, as the modern Socinians do, we cannot acknowledge them as Christians and Brethren; we cannot offer them any Church communion, nor accept of it, if offered by them. How much soever they may attempt to recommend themselves by a specious appearance of piety, we boldly pronounce them perverters of Christianity, fighters against God,* and gross idolaters; with whom we wish to have no fellowship in our Churches, and to whom, according to the injunction of an Apostle, we will not say, "God speed."r We applaud the zeal of Christopher Krainscius, who, when Smalcus, a Socinian leader, with his followers, troubled the Orthodox with an unreasonable demand of union, first in the Synod of Lublin, in the year 1612, and afterwards in the Synod of Belzo, honestly replied, "Sirs, begone, give us no trouble; for sooner may heaven enter into an agreement with hell, than we, the Evangelical, with you. Let the man who fears God, go out from this Church;" and instantly he himself went out. When the adversaries complained of

Krainscius, as having by this conduct and language pronounced them unworthy of his company, Count Leszczinius rejoined, "I also fear God, and therefore, I will remove;" and no sooner did he utter the word than he went out, mounted his carriage, and departed. Thus the union demanded was refused.* Whoever wishes to see more on this topic, may consult the learned Theses of the venerable Voet, on the necessity and utility of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity."†

XXII. But what would a naked and merely speculative knowledge and acknowledgment of this mystery avail, unless to these were added the pious DEPENDANCE OF THE SOUL UPON A THREE-ONE GOD? No sooner is the believer divinely instructed in this truth than he delights in it; rejoicing that now he knows and believes those mysteries relating to his God, which transcend all sense, all language, all understanding;—which are worthy of his incomprehensible infinitude;—and by which, in fine, he is distinguished from all the idols of the nations, and from those false Gods which every one, by his own perverse conceptions, has formed for himself. "I have found thee," says Faith, "I have found, and I recognise thee, O my God, the Rock of my salvation, of whom the rest of the world are ignorant; and whom the Athenians, the wisest of mortals, confessed to be to them UNKNOWN. Thou art He;* in the most absolute unity Three; in a distinct Trinity, One; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Thou alone art the 'true God and eternal life.'

XXIII. Nor does faith stop here. But, acknowledging the Father as God, she confidently commits herself to his omnipotent power, his unsearchable wisdom, his unbounded goodness, and the inexhaustible riches of his all-sufficiency. Acknowledging the Son as God, she rests securely on his satisfaction as most ample, and as deriving infinite value from the dignity of his godhead. "Surely shall one say, In JEHOVAH have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come.... In JEHOVAH shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Acknowledging the Holy Ghost as God, she firmly relies on his wise and holy guidance, and reposes an unsuspecting confidence in his testimony as infallible, and infinitely

worthy of credit.† Knowing, too, that these three are One, faith is not distracted in her operations, but devolves her whole weight on this Tri-une God;—assured from their unity of will, as well as of essence, that all the three persons harmoniously concur in promoting her salvation.

XXIV. Nothing is more false than that calumny of the Remonstrants, by which they deny that the article of the Holy Trinity has any practical use. Every doctrine of "the truth, is according to godliness:" and shall this character not apply to a doctrine so conspicuous, so fundamental? This article is even the source of all genuine faith, of all true religion. He cannot have Christian faith, who doth not believe that a person in the Godhead could have been given, and has been actually given us, to be a successful Mediator with God; but this would have been impossible, if the Godhead had subsisted only in one person. He who does not adore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as equal in divine majesty, worships not the true God, but a creature of his own imagination. Go now, if you will, and boldly affirm, that this doctrine, which is absolutely essential to Christian faith and piety, is unprofitable in relation to practice. The Remonstrants are guilty of offending and dishonouring God, when, in order to flatter the Socinians, for whom they entertain too great a regard, they describe them as persons, "who so regulate their lives according to the rule of the Gospel, that they worship the Father in his Son, and, by devout and pious supplications, solicit from both, the grace of the Holy Ghost."* What sort of language, alas! shall we now have the unhappiness to hear? Do they regulate their lives according to the rule of the Gospel, who, by denying the satisfaction of Christ, overthrow the Gospel? Do those worship the Father in the Son, who slanderously affirm that the eternal Son of God is a mere man,† and who, whilst they adore him as such, make him an idol? Do those men, by pious supplications, implore the grace of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, who blasphemously allege, that the Spirit is only an attribute of God, or a creature, or at least, a person of some intermediate dignity betwixt God and a creature? How much more justly does Ignatius say, "Whosoever declares that

God is one only, in such a sense as to rob Christ of Divinity, is a devil, and an enemy of all righteousness."*

XXV. Let us now point out the more special uses of this article. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is profitable, in the first place, for INSTRUCTION, and that in a two-fold respect. 1st, Our understanding is informed in what manner it ought to be exercised in its meditations concerning God. Not confining its views merely to his One essence with its attributes, it must ascend to the Wonderful Trinity. Rightly to know God, is, unquestionably, an important part of piety; and a more excellent object of contemplation cannot be presented to the mind, than this tremendous mystery, the intuitive and perfect knowledge of which, will complete its felicity in the light of glory. 2dly, From this incomprehensible mystery, which surpasses all sense and reason, we learn that we must renounce our own wisdom in divine matters, and reduce every thought into captivity to the obedience of faith. No one is prepared to form right views of this mystery, who has not risen above the low sphere of the senses and human reasonings, and soared to the sublimer region of faith; where, relying solely on God's own testimony respecting himself, he believes what he is able neither to see with his eyes, nor comprehend with his mind,—stopping at that precise point, beyond which divine revelation doth not conduct him. "You hear," says Gregory Nazianzen, of the generation of the Son; be not inquisitive with respect to its mode. You hear that the Spirit proceeds from the Father; beware of curiously inquiring into the manner of this procession."†

XXVI. Secondly, This doctrine is conducive to CONSOLATION. 1st, O how delightful is it to behold in the very intimate union, or rather unity, of the Three Divine persons, a pattern and representation of our own union with Christ, and, through Christ, with God! This astonishing idea is suggested by our Lord's prayer,—"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; ... that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me." 2dly, O how pleasant is it to believe that the

Father, who has adopted me for a son, is God; who, being himself Lord of all, is able to make me an heir of all things;—to reflect that the Son, to whom my soul is betrothed, is, equally with the Father, God, and the King of glory;—to know that the Holy Spirit, by whom I am sealed unto the day of complete salvation, is, in like manner, God, and, consequently, truth itself!* 3dly, O how delightful is it for me, when meditating on the mystery of the Sacred Trinity, to behold in the face of the eternal Father, the kindness of his unbounded love towards me;—in the face of the co-eternal Son, the endearing familiarity of the purest brotherly love;†—and in the light of the Holy Spirit, the bonds of my union with God!

XXVI. In the third place, it is useful for ADMONITION. It serves to admonish us, 1st, That we Christians, who ought to "be followers of God, as dear children,"w should live together in perfect harmony, being "of one accord, of one mind;" "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." 2dly, That we should reverence the divine majesty of our Father;—that we should, with alacrity, throw open the doors of our hearts to the Son, the king of glory;—that we should not "grieve,"z nor "vex," nor "quench,"b the Holy Spirit, who is a person of the same divine dignity with the Father, and the Son; but consecrate our whole selves to him as temples sacred to his honour,—solicitously avoiding all approaches to that sin against Him, which shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.d

I conclude with the words of Synesius, in his third Hymn.*

"I praise thee as One; I praise thee as Three.

While Three, thou art One; while One, thou art Three."

DISSERTATION IV

ON FAITH IN GOD THE FATHER

I. IT is an approved and well-known observation of Divines, that the term FATHER, when applied to God, is sometimes taken essentially,* and sometimes personally. † Taken essentially, it is common to the whole undivided Trinity. In this view, it is employed chiefly with reference to the creatures; for that on account of which God is denominated the Father of mankind and of other creatures, is not peculiar to any one Person, but pertains equally to each. He is called "the Father of all," because he created all, and "the Father of Spirits,"^b because "he formeth the spirit of man within him;" and, also, because he exercises a watchful providence over mankind, extending his care to every individual. "He hath made of one blood," said the Apostle Paul to the Athenians, "all the nations of men.... He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." Now these expressions are to be deemed no less applicable to the Second and the Third, than to the First Person in the Godhead.

II. The name FATHER, however, now falls to be considered by us personally, as the designation of the First Person. We shall observe that he is from himself; that he alone begat the Son, in an incomprehensible manner; and that from him, together with the Son, the Holy Spirit proceeded, in a manner equally ineffable. All that the Scriptures propound as the distinguishing properties of the Father, are comprised in this description.

III. The first of these properties, is the Father's being the FIRST PERSON.* When we call the Father the first person, let it be observed, we do not understand the expression as relating to the order of DURATION; as if he were before the other persons with regard to age or time. For the "goings forth" of the Son, "have been from of old, even from everlasting." "The LORD possessed," this personal wisdom, "in the beginning of his way, before his works of old," before all time. Hence Athanasius has justly said; "The Son is of the Father without beginning, and begotten of him from eternity." † The Spirit also, through whose agency Christ was offered up as a

spotless sacrifice to God, (which without any inconvenience, and even with great propriety, may be understood of the Third person,)38 is called "the Eternal Spirit." Eternity, indeed, is so essential a property of God, that a person not eternal ought not to be acknowledged as Divine. "Eternal power," is part of that which may be known of God from the suggestions of nature itself. What is eternal, too, could have nothing prior to it, even for a moment. Athanasius has, accordingly, well said in his Creed; "The Godhead of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is one; and their majesty CO-ETERNAL."*

IV. Again, we do not call the Father the First person, in the order of NATURE or CAUSALITY. This is nowhere affirmed in Scripture, beyond which it is not safe to speak on so awful a mystery. A cause is properly defined, that which gives existence to something else. But this cannot take place among the Divine persons, whose essence is one and the same. It is wrong, too, where the nature is one, as here, to entertain any conception of priority or posteriority of nature. The ancient Greek Christians, I am aware, admitted the cause and what is caused, † amongst the Divine persons. But though they thus employed phrases which scarcely merit approbation, their meaning was sound; they explicitly denied all priority and inequality of nature. Let us see how Damascenus expresses himself on this topic. "When we say that the Father is the head of the Son, or greater than the Son, we by no means affirm that he is PRIOR IN TIME OR SUPERIOR IN NATURE TO THE SON, for by him he made the worlds: We intend nothing but this, that the Father is the cause of the Son; that is, that the Son was begotten of the Father, not the Father of the Son." ‡ We disapprove of some expressions in this quotation, as inaccurate. To say that "the Father is the cause of the Son," is harsh, indistinct, and unscriptural. Nor is it true that, in that respect, the Father is greater than the Son; since the Son accounts it no robbery "to be equal with God." Orthodoxy, however, is secured, when it is affirmed, that the Father is not styled the cause of the Son, in any other sense, but as the Son is begotten of him; and when all priority of nature and of time is excluded.

V. In fine, we do not consider the Father as first in DIGNITY or EXCELLENCE. Infinite and supreme excellence is an essential attribute of Deity: and if any person were possessed of greater excellence and dignity than the Son or the Holy Spirit, neither of these persons could be the Most High God. "These three are one," in essence, and in all essential attributes; equal in dignity, and equal in glory.*

VI. But the Father is the First person in the following respects. 1st, In the order of SUBSISTENCE. The hypostasis is ascribed to the Father. The Son is called "the express image of his person," the character of his hypostasis. The Father, therefore, is the archetype,† the Son the resemblance:‡ But the archetype is prior to that which is conformed to it.§ The Apostle makes use of the same similitude in another place, when he calls the Son "the image of the invisible God." Whilst this priority deprives the Son of no part of his excellence, it brings no addition to that of the Father. On the contrary, the equality of both is elegantly pointed out by this metaphor. Theophylact has the following beautiful remark: "The character, or the form expressed, doth not exceed the hypostasis, or the form expressing; lest, in so far as it exceeds, it should have no hypostasis. Nor is the hypostasis greater than the character; otherwise, some part of it, at least, would not be expressed."

VII. 2dly, In the order of OPERATION. Since the Father works by the Son, it necessarily follows that, in relation to the other persons, he works originally and from himself,* and has in himself the principle of operation, as well personally as essentially. The following assertion of our Lord relates to this subject: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."m This declaration holds respecting the Son, considered as well in his Divine, as in his Mediatorial character. As, in his human nature, the Son doth nothing without the incitement, command, and example of the Father, but in all his actions performs the will and displays the holiness of the Father; so as the Son of God, he can do nothing "of himself," †

nothing, as the Hebrews would express it לבדו, separately from the Father. The essence, the power, and the will of both, are one and the same; yet the Father takes the lead in the order of operation, and the Son "sees" him operating; that is, knows intimately, approves, and executes with perfect exactness, the Father's counsels and decrees,—which are, at the same time, his own.

Thus it is clear that the order of operation begins on the part of the Father. Nor, again, doth this prerogative of order, derogate in the least from the supreme dignity of the Son; unless one should very absurdly regard it as an evidence of weakness and inferiority that, since the power and will of the Father and the Son are one and the same, the Son can neither do nor will any thing, but in and with the Father. The Son himself hath amply guarded his own dignity, by testifying, that "what things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise."* The meaning is not, as Grotius wrests the expression, that the Son does other works corresponding to these; but that he does the same works, and performs them in like manner. This is to be understood, as Nazianzen observes, "not with respect to the likeness of the things done, but with respect to an equal dignity of power and authority." † The expression intimates too, as Cyril of Alexandria says on this text, "the absolute identity of the works." ‡ If the words are explained in this manner, they will furnish an incontestable proof, not only that our Lord had done nothing wrong in curing the impotent man, but even that it was utterly impossible for him to do wrong; because, provided only the distinction of the personal order of operation be preserved, the power and the will by which he works miracles, are the same with the power and the will of the Father. Now this was the scope of our Lord's discourse.

VIII. The second characteristical property of the Father, is that he is OF HIMSELF. This is to be understood, not in relation to the essence, but to the mode of having the essence. With respect to the essence, both the Son and the Holy Spirit are that God who is of himself. That the Deity is of himself—that, owing to the glory of his infinite perfections, he depends on no other, but has his existence

and all that he possesseth of himself,—is so necessarily included in the notion of the Deity, that one who, with regard to his essence, is from another, for this precise reason, cannot be God. The ancients, therefore, rightly called Christ, God of himself, and by himself.* Amongst other instances, Eusebius, in a panegyric Oration on Paulinus, Bishop of Tyre, denominates Christ "the proper Son of the supreme God, and God of himself;"† because being the true God, he possesses that Divine essence, which is from itself, although he has it as a Son from the Father. The Father, then, is from himself with regard to personality; that is, the Divine essence is communicated to him from no other person; for nowhere does the sacred volume intimate that the Father was begotten, or proceeded, or in any manner came forth from another. Athanasius, accordingly, has well said: "We believe in one unbegotten God, the Father Almighty, who hath his subsistence from himself."‡

IX. The third distinguishing property of the Father, is that HE ALONE FROM ETERNITY, BEGAT THE SON. He, accordingly, says, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." These words were addressed to Christ, as the Apostle expressly assures us, in a sense altogether peculiar to himself: but, in what this generation consists, it is impossible for us weak mortals to understand or explain. Athanasius, whom I have just quoted, very properly says, "He was begotten in a manner ineffable and incomprehensible."* The very idea of generation, however, properly so called, namely, that by which one is constituted the son of any person, includes the communication of the same nature.³⁹ In created persons, the nature is the same only in species; but in God, owing to his absolute unity, it is the same in reference to number. By the generation of the Son, then, we understand that act of God, by which he has communicated to the Son the same numerical essence which he himself hath, that the Son may have it in like manner.

X. We do not hazard these assertions without authority from sacred writ. The Son himself leads the way, laying, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, to have life in himself." "To

have life in himself," is, not merely, to have enough for himself for that infinitely happy life, which alone is worthy of God; but, also, to be a fountain of life, to impart it to those who had no existence, and to restore it to those who are dead. These are essential perfections of God. In this manner, "the Father hath life in himself." Now the Father hath given to the Son to have the same life in himself, in the same manner; and this necessarily implies the communication of the same essence, which lives by itself, and is the source of all true life.⁴⁰ Several Protestant Divines, I am aware, and some, too, of great eminence, contend that these expressions refer to Christ, not directly in relation to his Divine character,* but to his Mediatorial office.† But, although we should grant them this, (which, however, it is not necessary for us to do,) still it could not have been given to Christ, that, as Mediator, he should possess a fountain of life in himself, unless he possessed a nature which lives of itself, and which is even life from and by itself:‡ For this is the peculiar prerogative of God, and hence the Psalmist adores him thus: "With thee is the fountain of life;"p and this glory he will give to none that is not God.

XI. But we cannot so easily concede to our adversaries, that, by the generation of Christ mentioned in the second Psalm, his resurrection from the dead is intended; and that, by this day, we are to understand the day on which God, having raised him from the dead, appointed him the King of his church. For, 1st, To beget, signifies nowhere in the sacred volume, to rescue from death; and we are not at liberty to coin new significations of words. 2dly, Though, possibly, it were sometimes used in that metaphorical acceptation, (which, however, is not yet proved,) it cannot be understood in this passage in any other than its proper sense. It is here adduced as a reason for which Christ is called the Son of God. Now Christ is the Sol of God, not figuratively, but properly; for the Father is called his proper Father, and he himself is denominated the proper Son of the Father; by which designation he is distinguished from those who are his sons in a metaphorical sense. 3dly, These words are spoken to Christ with a certain emphasis, with which they could not have been addressed to any of the angels, much less, to any of mankind. But if they meant

nothing more than the raising of him from the dead, they would attribute nothing to Christ, which he doth not possess in common with many others, who, in like manner, are raised up by the power of God to glory and an everlasting kingdom. 4thly, Christ raised himself from the dead, too, by his own power;u from which it would follow, according to this interpretation, that he begat himself, and that he is his own Son. 5thly, It is not true, in fine, that Christ was not begotten of the Father, nor called his Son till that very day on which he was raised from the dead; for, as is abundantly manifest from the Gospel history, he often, when yet alive, professed himself the Son of God, and was often acknowledged as such. 6thly, To-day refers to time, when human concerns are in question; but this expression, when applied to Divine things, must be understood in a sense suitable to the majesty of the godhead.* And if any word may be transferred from time to denote eternity, which is the complete and perfect possession, at once, of an interminable life; what can be better adapted to express its unsuccessive duration, than the term to-day?

XII. Nor can our adversaries derive any support to their cause from the words of Paul, Acts 13:32, 33. "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus;* as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." For, 1st, Paul doth not here prove the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, from this expression in the second Psalm, (which, though it describes him who is raised again, doth not prove his resurrection;) but from Isaiah 55:3, and Psalm 16:10, while he adds, verses 34th and 35th, "And, as concerning that he raised him up from the dead," &c. 2dly, The words, "having raised up Jesus," do not even relate to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but to the exhibition of him as a Saviour. This raising of him up, is expressly distinguished from the raising of him again from the dead, which is subsequently spoken of, verse 34th. The meaning is, that God fulfilled the promise made to the fathers, when he exhibited Christ to mankind in the flesh. But what was that promise? This appears from the second Psalm, where God promises to the Church

that, in due time, he would anoint as King over her, his own Son, begotten of himself, TO-DAY; that is, from eternity to eternity; for with God there is a perpetual to-day. Grotius, whose name is not offensive to our opposers, has remarked that Luke makes use of the same word[†] to signify exhibiting in Acts 2:30, 3:26. To these we add another instance from chap. 7:37. "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you."[‡] 3dly, Were we to admit that the words of the Psalm are applied to the resurrection of Christ, which seemed proper to Calvin, Cameron, and several other Protestant Divines; the sense will only be this; that, by his being thus raised up again, it was declared and demonstrated that Christ is the Son of the Father, begotten of him from everlasting. The Jewish Council condemned him for blasphemy, because he had called himself the Son of God. But, by raising him again from the grave, after he had been put to death as a blasphemer, God acquitted him from that charge, and publicly recognised him as his Only-begotten Son. Thus he was declared, exhibited, and distinguished as the Son of God with power, expressly and particularly, to the entire exclusion of all others. The original word here employed by the Apostle, is remarkably expressive; and, as Ludovicus de Dieu has learnedly observed, it signifies that Christ was placed betwixt such bounds, and so separated and discriminated from others, that he neither should nor can be judged to be any one else than the Son of God. The expression, "with power,"^{*} may be joined with "declared;" and then the meaning will be, that he was shown to be the Son of God by a powerful argument. Or it may be connected with "the Son of God;" and then it will intimate, that he is the Son of God in the most ample and exalted sense of which the term is susceptible; so that this name, when ascribed to him, is "a more excellent name" than any that is given to the noblest of creatures.w

XIII. The fourth personal property of the Father is, that THE HOLY SPIRIT PROCEEDS FROM HIM, TOGETHER WITH THE SON. † The Spirit is, therefore, styled, "the Spirit of his mouth;" and, again, "the Spirit of God," and "the breath of the Almighty."y Thus far our knowledge extends. But what the mode of this breathing is, and how

the communication of the essence to the Third Person by breathing differs from the communication of the same essence to the Second Person by generation,—are mysteries, the knowledge of which, it has seemed good to the great Teacher to reserve for the celestial state. We have no complacency in the boldness of the Scholastic Theologians, who have asserted, that generation pertains to the Understanding, and that the Father, by the contemplation of himself, begat that personal image of himself, who is called the Son: while they refer breathing to the Will, and say, that the Father, in conjunction with the Son, by favouring and loving himself, produced the Holy Spirit. Not only are we afraid of becoming so profoundly wise; but we have, also, an aversion at such vain refinements of human ingenuity, presumptuously amusing itself with Divine topics. Far better, in our apprehension, is the discretion of Gregory Nazianzen, who satisfies himself with the following simple declaration of the truth; "The Holy Spirit is truly a Spirit, who proceeds from the Father; not, however, by filiation, or generation, but by procession."*

XIV. This one thing, however, we can safely affirm; that, while it belongs to the Father alone to beget the Son, the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.† This may be gathered from John 15:26. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth* from the Father, he shall testify of me." It is no less certain that the Spirit is sent by the Son, than it is, that he proceedeth from the Father. Both the sending and the procession here spoken of, I acknowledge, are not natural, or hypostatical, but economical; † and the subjects directly intended, are the giving of the Holy Spirit, and his going forth, to men. But these presuppose the eternal mystery; for it is altogether fit and congruous that the manifestation of the Divine persons, which is afforded in time, should correspond with the real manner of their subsistence from eternity.

XV. I do not, however, dissemble, that to this observation it may be objected, that Christ, who, in respect to his person, is not from the

Holy Spirit, is said to be sent by the Spirit; for we read in Isaiah 48:16. "And now the LORD God and his Spirit hath sent me." But I reply, 1st, It is not quite certain whether it be Christ that speaks in this passage. Eminent theologians, as Jerome, Vatablus, Calvin, Junius, our own Dutch Divines, and others quoted by Cornelius a Lapide, will have these to be the words of Isaiah himself, by which he vindicates his authority as a Prophet of God. 2dly, If the words are to be referred to Christ, which is the opinion of a great number of ancient as well as modern writers, whom I dare not contradict; it may be affirmed that he was sent by the Holy Spirit, as he was man, and sent for the redemption of mankind; for the formation of our Lord's human nature is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In this manner A Lapide, after Anselm, answers the objection. 3dly, The Hebrew text may, with propriety, be translated thus; "The LORD God hath sent me, and his Spirit."* According to this version, the mission of the Spirit is connected with the mission of the Son; which exactly corresponds with the event In whatever sense you interpret the passage, it makes nothing against our hypothesis.

XVI. Why, too, should he be called "the Spirit of the Son," and be said to "receive of the things of the Son,"^b unless he proceeded from the Son? In the economy of redemption, as has been more than once remarked, the Three persons act suitably to the relations in which they stand to each other in the godhead.[†]

XVII. Hence it is evident, what opinion we ought to form respecting the obstinate contention of the Greeks with the Latins relative to this point. There are faults, I doubt not, on both sides. Since the Creed of Constantinople, published in the year of our Lord 381, contained this expression, "the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father;"[‡] the Latins did wrong in adding to that Creed these words, "and to the Son."[§] On this addition see Vossius,^{||} and Heidegger.[¶] The Latins did wrong, I say, in this matter; for, although what they added was true, the words of the Creed were the words of Scripture, whilst the addition is not contained in Scripture, in these precise terms. Besides, whoever makes any addition to an ancient Creed, involves himself in the guilt

of bearing false witness; for he would have it to be believed that the Fathers who compiled that Creed determined something which they did not determine. The Greeks, also, have done wrong in contending so pertinaciously concerning this point; for the doctrine of the Latins is conformable to truth, and it was delivered in the same manner by ancient Doctors of their own church; as has been long ago shown from the writings of Athanasius, Epiphanius, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and others. Nay, if we are willing to rest satisfied with what is essential, scarcely any real controversy remains. For it is of very little consequence, whether we hold that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, or "from the Father through the Son;"* as Cyril of Constantinople expresses it in his Confession, written in the year of Christ 1631. As neither of these two expressions occurs in holy writ, so neither of them is improper, or inconsistent with the truth. But let thus much suffice on this subject.

XVIII. We must here take notice of the opinion of Episcopius respecting the subordination of the other persons to the Father. He contends "that the Father is so the First person, that he is, also, the HIGHEST in ORDER, in DIGNITY, and in POWER.—In ORDER, because it was necessary that the Son and the Holy Spirit should be from him—In DIGNITY, because the Father is the Fountain and the cause of their existence; and it is more honourable to derive existence from none than to receive it from another, to beget than to be begotten, to cause to proceed than to proceed*—In POWER, that is, authority or dominion; because the Father has authority to send and to give the Son, and to pour out the Holy Spirit; but neither of them has authority over the Father; and accordingly we no where read of the Father as sent or given, but always as sending or giving." Such is the doctrine of Episcopius; † and similar sentiments are expressed by Curcellæus.‡

XIX. In reply to these writers, we make the following general remarks. 1st, They depart in this instance from the catholic faith of the Church, which, as it is expressed by the Emperor,§ "believes, according to the instructions of Apostles and the doctrine of the

Gospel, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are one God, subsisting in equal majesty, and in an adorable Trinity."|| Athanasius, in like manner, states the common faith in the following terms: "Where there is an undivided dignity, one sovereignty, one power, and will, and energy, peculiarly distinguishing the Trinity from the creatures,—there is one God."¶ 2dly, The majesty of the Father is artfully extolled with a view to disparage the infinite dignity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the will of the Father himself, "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." 3dly, All these expressions have a manifest tendency utterly to deprive the Son and the Spirit of true godhead. A subordinate Deity, is not Deity. Supreme majesty, dignity, and power, are essential attributes of godhead; and he that is not possessed of them, is not God.

XX. More particularly, 1st, The Scriptures teach a distinction of order; but, since it is merely a distinction of personal order, it implies no superiority or inferiority attributed to the essence. Athanasius, who has stated this distinction of order with singular accuracy, makes the following excellent observation, in the Creed which is commonly received by the Church: "And in this Trinity, nothing is prior or posterior," that is, with respect to dignity, "nothing greater or less; but all these Three persons are co-eternal and co-equal." 2dly, Begetting and being begotten, causing to proceed and proceeding,* imply no distinction of DIGNITY amongst the Divine persons: for the begetting and the causing to proceed are the communication of the same numerical essence, which belongs to him who begets and causes to proceed; and which possesses an infinite dignity, than which none greater can either be allowed, or imagined, without a contradiction. 3dly, The sacred writings nowhere speak of the Father's having power, authority, and dominion over the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nor is it warrantable to infer any such superiority on the part of the Father, from the mission of the Son and Spirit; which is entirely according to the economy in redemption, and founded in the common council of the whole Trinity.

XXI. When the Father is denominated absolutely GOD, or ONE GOD, or THE ONLY TRUE GOD; this is intended to exclude those who are "called Gods,"^f not the other persons in the same individual essence. Oecumenius has the following remark on 1 Tim. 2:5. "When it is affirmed that there is one God, this is not in contradistinction to the Son or Spirit. Far be the thought. But the words refer to those who are not, and yet are styled Gods."* The appellation of Father even includes the Son in the same conception of godhead. Hence says Cyril of Jerusalem, "We call God Father, that as soon as we have thought of the Father, we may also think of the Son; for there is an immediate relation between Father and Son." † Gregory of Nyssa expresses the same idea thus: "The appellation of Father, by its relative import, shows that He hath a Son." †

XXII. When the Son calls the "Father greater than himself," the expression is not to be understood of him in relation to his Divine nature as the Son. We must not suppose that the Father is greater than he, "as the cause and principle of his existence."[‡] I sincerely wish that this expression had not been used by Basil, Gregory, Nazianzen, Hilary of Poitiers, and Damascenus, amongst the ancients; and, amongst the Protestants, by Danæus (who unjustly censures Lombard for omitting this reason of Christ's inferiority,) by Zanchius on Philip, 2:6, and by Gomar on the same passage. But the Father is greater than the Son, 1st, With regard to the human nature, which he has assumed. 2dly, With regard to the office of an ambassador, which he has undertaken. 3dly, With respect to the economy of his humiliation, and assuming the form of a servant. Accordingly, Athanasius, at the conclusion of his book on the Incarnation of Christ,* has the following remark: "And, when he says the Father who sent me is greater than I, he calls the Father greater than himself, with regard to his human nature. But, as he is the Word of the Father, he is his equal." In the first Dialogue against the Macedonians, too, he says, "Having assumed the subjection of a servile form, he is, for our sake, subjected to the Father;—not in the Divine nature, but by the union of that servile form which he assumed." †

XXIII. When the First person is called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (a title which often occurs at the beginnings of the Epistles,) he is called his Father, according to the Divinity,—his God, according to the Economy, both in relation to his human nature, and in reference to the covenant which subsists betwixt him as Mediator, and the Father. Athanasius, in the Dialogue just quoted, says, "As to the Divinity, God is his Father; but, as to the humanity, his God:" which he, afterwards, proves by that expression, "Thou art my God from my mother's belly." The same remarks are made by Gregory of Nyssa, Nazianzen, Epiphanius, and others, whose words are quoted by Forbes.‡ We thus answer novices who have dared to pervert our faith, in the language of the Fathers, that they may not boast of these frivolous subtleties as their own inventions; since the same cavils were both observed and refuted by the ancients. Whoever wishes to see the whole doctrine of Episcopius completely overthrown, may consult the accurate and solid Dissertation on the subjection of Christ,* by Andrew Essenius,—a man whom I venerate as my Preceptor and Father in the Lord.

XXIV. It is not sufficient that our faith contemplate the Father as the eternal Father of Christ, unless we are also brought to him as OUR OWN FATHER through Christ. Christ himself leads us to him when he says, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father;" in which words he intimates that there is a resemblance, and, at the same time, a diversity, in the Father's paternal relation, as it respects himself and us. This was judiciously observed by the ancients. "He said not," says Cyril of Jerusalem,† "to our Father, lest the creatures should have fellowship with the Only-begotten; but to my Father and your Father—my Father, in one respect, to wit, by nature—yours, in another respect, to wit, by adoption."

XXV. In what way God is the Father of believers, we have shown at large elsewhere.‡ Yet, that nothing may be wanting to this Dissertation, we briefly notice, that God is called our Father, 1st, With respect to our supernatural regeneration by his Spirit, by which a new and heavenly life is begun within us, and we, in our measure

and order, are even "made partakers of the Divine nature." Of this, the Evangelist John speaks in the following words: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."k 2dly, With respect to our marriage with the Lord Jesus; for when we become his Spouse, we pass into the Father's family, and the Father addresses us by the endearing name of "Daughter," while Jesus himself describes us, with the same breath, as "his Sister and his Spouse."m 3dly, With respect to adoption, by which we obtain the right and the privileges of sons, and the eternal inheritance is bequeathed to us by an immutable testament. We read, "Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children;" and "If children, then heirs."o

XXVI. The condition of the sons of God is truly excellent. If David accounted it so great a matter, to be called the son-in-law of such a king as Saul, how highly should we esteem the honour of being called the sons of the living God? 1st, How unparalleled is that dignity, by which we trace our descent, not from an earthly prince or monarch, but from the King of heaven! 2dly, What can be more beautiful than that Divine nature which we obtain by a new generation! God himself glories in his sons as his peculiar treasure, and even calls them "the first fruits of his increase;"r who are to him for a praise, and a name, and an honour. In this instance, his conduct almost resembles that of parents who glory before others in such of their children as are remarkable for beauty. 3dly, What more desirable, also, than a conjugal relation to the First-begotten Son of God, who is "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousands!" Nothing can even be conceived, more delightful, more enriching, or more glorious. 4thly, Nothing, in fine, can be more excellent than that inheritance, which the sons of God obtain in right of their adoption, and which is assigned diem by an irrevocable testament.

XXVII. It will not be unprofitable to prosecute this topic a little further; and, opening our Father's TESTAMENT, to inquire WHAT and HOW GREAT are the Blessings bequeathed, and under what STIPULATIONS, he has bequeathed them to us. By the

TESTAMENT, we understand, The last and immutable will of God, recorded in the sacred Scriptures, and confirmed by the death and blood of Jesus, by which he hath declared his chosen and believing people, heirs of the whole inheritance.

XXVIII. The Testament is the Will of God, or that "counsel of his will," by which he has appointed both the inheritance and the heirs, and to which our Lord referred, when he said, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."^v I add, that it is the last and irrevocable will of the Father; for as this is essential to a valid testament among men, so it is not wanting to this testament. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation." In this Will, he has assigned the inheritance as well of grace as of glory, of which we shall speak immediately. He has also appointed the heirs,—not indefinitely, all that shall believe; but these and the other persons particularly, whose "names are written in heaven,"^y and "graven upon the palms of God's hands;" This his Will, he has expressed in both parts of the holy Scriptures, which are, therefore, called a Testament.^a In fine, that this Will might in no respect be defective, the whole is confirmed and sealed by the blood and death of the Lord Jesus.

XXIX. To understand this, we must observe, that God the Father, did, by testament, intrust his Son Jesus with this honour, that he should be the head of the elect, to excel them in glory, and to possess authority to impart to them, all his blessings. Jesus, again, by the power committed to him by the Father, bequeathes his benefits by testament, to the elect, that they may be joint-partakers of them with himself. "I appoint to you (by testament) a kingdom, as my Father hath (by testament) appointed unto me."^d This making of the Testament, then, is originally the doing of the Father, but immediately of Christ the Mediator; who died, not to make void the inheritance by his death, for he is "alive for evermore," but to seal the promises, and to acquire for his people a right to the inheritance.⁴²

Hence the blood which he shed, is called "the blood of the testament."

XXX. The BLESSINGS bequeathed in the Testament, are inestimable. We reduce them at present to three principal heads. The first is THE POSSESSION OF THE WHOLE WORLD; for it was promised to Abraham and his seed, that they "should be heirs of the world." On these words, we may hear the commentary of Ludovicus de Dieu: "As sin, by separating us from God and subjecting us to his curse, rendered us exiles and outcasts, so that we had no spiritual right or dominion, corresponding to the character of the sons of God, over even the meanest of the creatures; so, when God becomes our God and we become his blessed people, we are restored, as sons, to the right and dominion of the whole paternal inheritance: And, since there is nothing besides God and the world, we are made heirs of the world, both the earthly and the heavenly, the present and the future. Hence it is said, All things are yours; and, amongst these all things, are mentioned, the world, and what ever is in it, things present and things to come."

XXXI. This possession of the world, we may observe, consists in the following things. 1st, Every son of God possesses as much of the good things of this world as the wisdom of our heavenly Father judges sufficient for the support of the animal life, without exposing the spiritual to detriment; and so possesses, that, in the enjoyment of it, he may taste the love of his Father, who confers it upon him as a pledge of better blessings, and of his Elder Brother, who himself became poor, that his people might be rich. This love of God the Father and of Christ, added to the smallest crumb of bread or drop of cold water, renders them, beyond measure, preferable to all the most exquisite luxuries of the rich of this world. "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." 2dly, All the creatures must serve the children of God as steps by which they may ascend to the Creator. In all of them, as in a bright mirror, they contemplate his adorable perfections, and thus find cause of exultation and delight. They perceive in them, in particular, the love

of God towards themselves. When they behold the sun, the moon, and the stars, they rejoice that their Father hath lighted up so many luminaries for them, of which they may avail themselves in performing works which become them as the sons of God. Nor do they survey this display of his goodness with less admiration, than if every individual had his own sun, or his own moon, shining upon him. They do not exceed the bounds of propriety, when they even entertain the thought, that, for their sake, the world still remains in its present state, and that for this the wicked are indebted to them; for "the holy seed is the substance" (the support) of the world. 3dly, All the creatures, and the whole administration of God towards them, "work together for their good." This holds so extensively, that angels in heaven and devils in hell, are both obliged to bear a part in the service. As to angels in heaven, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation?" As to the infernal spirit, the great teacher of arrogance, was he not, when aiming at a very different object, compelled, in spite of himself—by his buffetings to teach Paul humility? 4thly, If this world, which, by reason of sin, is subjected to vanity, cannot suffice them, God will from its ashes, after its destruction, form another, and make "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Each of these ideas may be included in the general promise of the inheritance of the world.

XXXII. The second blessing of this testament, is A SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. "I appoint unto you," says Christ, "a kingdom." To this kingdom, even such of the children of God as are, in other respects, in the humblest condition, the poor, and servants, and handmaids, are called. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world" to become "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him." To this belong, 1. The excellency of the sons of God, by which they surpass all other men. 2. Victory over sin and the unruly lusts of the flesh, to which even kings and dreaded tyrants are enslaved. 3. The treading of the devil under their feet. 4. Triumph over a whole conquered world, in spite of whose rage they shall be eternally saved. 5. Inestimable riches of spiritual gifts; even in the

midst of poverty.^a 6. A holy peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost. All these privileges are begun here in grace, and consummated hereafter in glory.

XXXIII. The third benefit is GOD himself. Hence says the Apostle, ... "heirs of God." Here, the inheritance is mutual. Believers are God's portion, and God is their portion, as these are made reciprocal by the Prophet: "The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the Former of all things; and Israel is the rod (the tribe) of his inheritance."^d In this possession of God, his children find, 1st, Protection against every evil. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress." Why? He is "MY GOD, in him will I trust." 2dly, The communication of every good.^f For, 1. All that infinitude of perfections which is in God himself, will appear glorious and admirable in the sons of God, and will impart itself to them, that they may enjoy it for their consummate felicity. And what can the soul desire, beyond this infinite Portion? 2. What will not God give those, to whom he gives himself?^h

XXXIV. In this testament, if it is considered in its whole extent, with all its promises, there are no STIPULATIONS properly so called; for it consists of absolute and unmixed promises, suspended upon no condition to be performed by our own strength. Yet the divine wisdom and care have so adjusted all things in it, that a certain and a wise connexion is established amongst them, and the improvement of the blessings promised first in order, paves the way for the possession of further benefits. We have elsewhere treated of this at large.

XXXV. In the same books, therefore, in which the Testament is contained, God has enjoined every one that would take comfort from the promised inheritance, 1st, To love, search, meditate upon, and lay up in his heart, as no contemptible part of his inheritance, those writings which exhibit the Testament. He must esteem them more than his necessary food.^j 2dly, To value highly, as it deserves, the promised inheritance. 1. To hunger and thirst after it, and to be

satisfied with nothing short of it. 2. To consider all other things, in comparison of it, loss and dung; and to be prepared, cheerfully to sell all that he hath, in order to obtain the pearl of inestimable worth. 3. To glorify God for his great goodness. 4. To keep, with care and diligence, what he has already received. 3dly, To walk as becomes his present happy state, and the hope of so glorious an inheritance. 4thly, To be ready to impart to his brethren what he has received from his Father, both in things temporal and spiritual; and to exert his endeavours that others may be brought to possess the same inheritance with himself. The individual sustains no loss, but rather derives an accession of happiness, from the numbers of his fellow-heirs; for the abundance of love serves wonderfully to heighten the joy.

XXXVI. It remains to be observed, that if, in a matter of so great importance, we would not impose upon ourselves by flattering imaginations, it is necessary carefully to examine ourselves, by those distinguishing characters of the children of God which the Scriptures supply. The chief of these are the following. 1st, The impression and expression of the Divine image, with a holy conformity to our Father. What is more natural than for a son to resemble his Father? The natural Son of God is "the brightness of the Father's glory;" and it is fit that we, in our order and measure, should be so too. As corrupt Adam "began a son in his own likeness, after his own image;" so God forms his children in his own likeness, "in righteousness and true holiness." This resemblance to God is gradually promoted by familiar intercourse with him, until, having obtained "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," of which the Apostle speaks, we shall become perfectly like him.

XXXVII. 2dly, A new life, which is worthy of God, and the effect of the Spirit of adoption, who is the Spirit of life. The life of creatures never fails to correspond to their spirit. The natural man has not a nobler spirit, nor a more excellent principle of life than his soul (anima); and consequently he lives merely an animal life. But as the children of God are endowed with a "free Spirit," who is also the

Spirit of Christ; y so they, in their measure, live such a life as Christ lived, exerting their utmost efforts to copy after his example and pattern. "Be ye followers of God," says the Apostle, "as dear children."

XXXVIII. 3dly, A true and sincere love to God. Nature itself teaches this; for what genuine son doth not love his father? This is not only a written law, but born with us. Now this love to God arises, partly, from the consideration of his infinitely amiable perfections, which his children are admitted familiarly to contemplate, "their eyes seeing the King in his beauty;" partly from the beams of Divine love continually shed forth upon them, by which they cannot fail to be inflamed.^b Whenever they attentively reflect upon this love, they consider the whole capacity of their soul as too limited to render adequate returns of love.

XXXIX. 4thly, Filial reverence and obedience. This arises from that love of which we have just spoken. This love forbids a man to do any thing displeasing to God, and inspires him with so ardent a zeal for his glory, that he cannot, without anguish, see his honour infringed by others.^d It disposes him also to discharge, with promptitude and alacrity, all the duties of religion. Further, it does not suffer a man to be at ease, if perhaps, by an inconsiderate action, he has offended God, and forfeited those gracious smiles of his face with which he was formerly cheered; it constrains him at last to prostrate himself, with the profoundest reverence, at the feet of his heavenly Father, with sorrow and tears to implore the pardon of his offences, and to promise greater circumspection in his future conduct.^f

XL. 5thly, Undissembled brotherly love, which he bears for all those in whom he perceives the Divine image, and a participation of the same grace with himself. Whilst other evidences are often imperceptible, this brotherly love furnishes the doubting soul with a comfortable mark of its state. It is impossible for the love of the brethren, to be separated from the love of God. Whoever loves the original, will also love the copy. Whoever loves God, will love him

who belongs to God, in whom he discerns the excellencies of God, and whom he believes to be beloved of God. Happy the man whose spirit bears witness with the Spirit of God, that these distinguishing characters of God's children, are found in himself.

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