

few, who alone are the sensible, upright, courageous men to detect falsehood, unravel delusion, discern error, and expose imposition: the only friends to mankind, and bravely bold to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and to own it in the midst of crafty and knavish fellows, and wild mad enthusiasts, who publish these lies amongst the deluded multitude, who are such fools as to believe what knaves and madmen tell them concerning the gospel.

RECAPITULATION.

Thus have we shewn, in opposition to the deistical scheme, that the light of nature in the works of God, and the reason of man, are insufficient to discover God clearly and fully to the soul, to direct us in the true worship of God, to make known a compleat system of morality, and to discover effectual motives to virtue.—Reason is likewise insufficient to discern the pardon of sin, the sanctification of the soul, and powerful supports under the troubles of life, and the approaches and terrors of death.—We have also taken a sixfold view of the experience of the whole world, as a striking evidence of the insufficiency of reason to lead man to eternal happiness in God:—Lastly, we have exposed the madness and folly of the deistical scheme to that contempt and scorn which it deserves from all sensible

sensible and honest men in the world, by shewing the glaring absurdities and shocking consequences which attend that scheme, and must sink it to eternity.

On this ground true christians triumph over all their enemies ; we bid defiance to our boldest adversaries ; we fear them not, yea, we dare them to the fight ; we will meet them at any time, and have no dread of the issue of the hottest conflict. O ! believers, rejoice ! your cause is good, your victory is sure : you are built on the eternal and immutable rock of truth ; and the gates of hell, i. e. the artifices of all the infidels in the world, shall never prevail against you. The church has been ever assaulted, and always triumphant.— But, at present, I must close. In the next Contemplation, we shall shew farther grounds of triumph ; when we will endeavour clearly to state the nature and display the evidences of the inspiration of the holy scriptures.

Read the following BOOKS on the subject
of the above DISSERTATION.

1. HALYBURTON's incomparable Treatise against the Deists, 4to. 1714.—This book was never valued equal to its worth and usefulness. I defy all the deists on earth to give a solid answer to it.

2. Dr. LELAND's VIEW of the Deistical Writers, 3 vols. 8vo.—This is a most entertaining and instructive work : I wish some able author would give us a like work on the Socinian Writers, with an Account of the principal answers to their errors by the ablest champions of the church of God.

3. Dr. LELAND's last great work on the NECESSITY of REVELATION, 2 vols. 8vo.—This book has had no answer, and I am persuaded it never will meet with a solid confutation.

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O N T H E
N A T U R E A N D E V I D E N C E S
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A C O N T E M P L A T I O N
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N A T U R E A N D E V I D E N C E S
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I N S P I R A T I O N.

It is possible for GOD to communicate IDEAS to the human MIND.—He can make himself known to be GOD alone that speaks.—He excited the MINDS of the sacred PENMEN to write.—He infused the THOUGHTS and MATTER of the SCRIPTURE into their SOULS.—He preserved their rational FACULTIES in SERENITY and regular ORDER.—He secured them from all ERRORS, and guarded them from making any MISREPRESENTATION of FACTS.—The REALITY of their INSPIRATION demonstrated from the sublime GOODNESS and TENDENCY of the DOCTRINES, LAWS, and PROMISES.

INSPIRATION is the infusion of the thoughts and words of the scripture into the minds of the prophets and apostles, by the Spirit of GOD.

The DIVINE AUTHORITY of the scriptures is their right and power to demand obedience in the name of GOD.

Divine inspiration consists in the wise and gracious impression and influence of the spirit of God on the rational soul or mind of man, whereby, or by which influence, the soul was enlarged in its apprehensions or conceptions concerning the perfections, intentions, and operations of God, in much higher degrees than it could have attained by reflection upon its own natural ideas, or by education and reasoning, however exerted or improved in any way whatsoever.

The divine authority of the sacred scriptures, is that peculiar and distinguishing right they have to be treated and regarded by men as true and awfully divine.

The immediate ground or foundation of this divine authority is, that God is their original author, source, and end : from him they came, concerning his nature and councils they treat, and to him they lead as their ultimate scope or end ; in his glory they conspire and terminate for ever.

As God is the author or fountain of the holy scriptures, so his most sublime and awful perfections are the only basis or foundation of their divine authority.

The sincerity and veracity of God demands and deserves to be credited in whatever it declares or foretells.

The immutable faithfulness, and inflexible justice of God, exact our regards and assent in whatever he proclaims and publishes as his own sentiments and thoughts; and require the most grateful reception of the good that he promises, and the most awful reverence of all the evil that he threatens.

His boundless power and dominion over his reasonable creatures demand immediate obedience to all the laws he reveals; and his infinite goodness and mercy require from us the most grateful acknowledgment for all the blessings he bestows.

The obligation that arises from the divine authority of the scriptures is eternal, immutable, and supreme; therefore it gives way to nothing, and ever remains inviolable.

Such is the perfection and excellence of the sacred scriptures in themselves; and, considered in their own intrinsic purity and goodness, that they stand on their own basis abundantly self-supported, nor can any recommendations of men, or angels equal their own.

The Bible intrinsically deserves, that all rational beings submit to its authority, and be governed by it wherever it is published in the world.

As every will ought to adore it, so every understanding ought to fall down before its authority, or its right to demand obedience in the name of God. To

To refuse subjection to divine revelation, when clearly seen and known, is to be looked upon with horror, as the very essence of rebellion against God.

It is the most malignant and daring treason against the majesty of God.

It is violating the great and fundamental law of heaven and earth : it is striking at the foundation of all the authority that is in God ; of all the rights that reside in his eternal nature and perfections ; even the throne of God rests on the credit of the scripture, and all his awful prerogative * is supported by it.

In short, revelation, objectively considered, is not only amiable, but venerable, sacred, and divine. It is not only the rule of man's temper and actions, but it is the sole rule and plan of God's own actions, which would render it sacred if it were not so of itself ; but, moreover, it is divine in the strictest sense ; all necessary truth being an essential efflux, or emanation, from the infinite and all-perfect mind.

Hence the Bible appears not only possessed of the highest worth, beauty, and excellence ; but invested with a supreme and absolute authority, not only attractive, but really awful ; of which no other account can be given than the divine-
ness

* The PREROGATIVE of God consists in his dignity or royal character, including personal sovereignty, absolute perfection, perpetual dominion or eternity of empire over all.

ness of the object. Every ray of truth and reason in divine revelation does really participate of the majesty of that God to whom truth and reason all belongs, and whose attribute reason is.

This is a view of scripture which ought never to be forgotten or disregarded for one moment ; that every ray of truth in the law participates of the unspotted holiness, justice, and majesty of God : and every ray of truth in the gospel participates of the glorious goodness, beauty, and love of that God, whose brightest resemblance and mirror the gospel is for ever.

The result of the above thoughts must be, that the divine authority of the holy scriptures consists in their right and power to declare the truth of doctrines ; to proclaim the most pure and extensive laws ; to make exceeding great and precious promises ; to denounce the most terrible threatenings ; to give out predictions of future events ; to exhibit the most beautiful examples, and disclose the most astonishing glories in the name of the sovereign and eternal God ; and to command in a moment the most hearty assent to the truth, the deepest subjection of soul and conscience to the will of God, as the redeemer, rewarder, and judge of immortal souls.

Having thus declared what we mean by inspiration and divine authority, and given you a short view of the ground or foundation of that

authority, let us proceed, by regular and easy steps, to consider the nature of inspiration more at large, till we attain a clear and comprehensive conception of so important and sublime an object.

We shall then go on to consider the evidences of inspiration ; and thus, by the help of God, rise up to absolute and invincible demonstration.

I. A REVELATION from GOD is possible, or it is possible for GOD to have an intimate INTERCOURSE with the human MIND ; and he can communicate IDEAS of TRUTH to the SOUL

A revelation involves no contradiction or disagreement of ideas, in the nature of the thing. There is in the idea of inspiration no contradiction to the nature of God, or the nature of man.

There is no repugnancy of ideas, or disagreement with the attributes of God, and the nature and powers of reason in man.

God is a **spiritual** being ; he is a living intelligent being, invisible to human eyes.—The soul is an equally invisible being, in a state of active existence, endued with understanding, or a capacity of receiving ideas, and discerning the nature and differences of things.

God is a thinking being : man is a thinking being. God is invisible life : man's soul is invisible life. God is a perceptive existence : man's
soul

soul is a perceptive existence. Almighty God has a capacity of forming ideas of all things : the soul has a capacity of receiving ideas of all things.

God is the sole author and fountain of all our rational powers : from him we derive the existence of our souls, and all their capacities of receiving ideas and discerning truth and error.

Without his ever-present agency, our souls are all weakness, darkness, and confusion ; we can make no progress at all in the attainment of knowledge and truth.

Now, as God is an omnipresent mind ; as he is all thought and consciousness ; as he has the nearest access to all the spirits he has made at all times, and in all places ; as he has unlimited presence, power, and knowledge himself ; and as he infused our conversible powers into us at first, and supports them every moment by his agency ; shall he not be able to converse with the souls he has made ; is the parent of all spirits intimately present with every mind or thoughtful being in his whole empire, and cannot he have the most intimate and intense access to his own offspring ? and so intimate as to assure the soul, that it is God himself that speaks with such clearness, energy, and evidence, as shall make it absurd to deny, and impossible to doubt of the voice of God to the soul.

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If

If men can make themselves known to each other by their words, as the copy of their thoughts ; if they can discover their secret sentiments and feelings to each other, even such secret thoughts which could never be known by the utmost acuteness and sagacity ;

Surely GOD can make himself known to man, in his perfections and counsels, far beyond the light of our reason. For if we deny this, we plainly suppose and assert this wretched absurdity, That GOD's knowledge, presence, and ability of mind is more bounded than man's capacity ; and that the ever-present and ever-active GOD wants a real excellence and perfection, of which his creature man is possessed. Can any man believe this that is endowed with common sense and reason ?

Will any person object the invisible nature of GOD, as that which renders it impossible ?

Let such objectors consider the following thoughts :

GOD has made men capable of infusing their ideas and intentions into other men, and receiving infusions of ideas, images, and passions from other men : although the agent or soul of every man is invisible to the senses of all mankind, all souls are equally invisible as GOD himself.

As the souls of three hundred millions of men on earth are invisible, and yet they can infuse trains of good or bad thoughts, images, and ideas into each other every day, and every hour, for sixty or seventy years together,

Is it then absurd, or contrary to reason, to suppose the supreme omnipresent mind can infuse good ideas, holy thoughts, and heavenly images or notions, and sacred notices of himself and his glories and counsels, although this great mind, this omnipresent soul be of an invisible nature as the soul of man?

Can the mind of man be incapable of receiving any ideas or notices from the almighty and omnipresent mind, only or merely because that supreme mind is invisible? Can any man be so silly and absurd as to assert and believe this?

What? Can our invisible minds communicate ideas to each other for seventy years together; and is the supreme mind shut out from this capacity, and divested of this power?

What? Can not the invisible, ever-active, ever-present, rational mind of God, that fills all worlds at once, give discoveries of his thoughts to the rational and invisible minds of men, which he himself has created, and every moment sustains in existence, powers, and consciousness?

Is God the only being that is thus limited and

shut out from the converse with spirits, and the instruction of immortal souls ?

Has man a capacity of infusing thoughts into ten thousand souls at once : and is GOD excluded from the souls of the creatures he has made, and every moment sustains ?

II. GOD can speak to the SOUL with such LIGHT and FORCE as shall distinguish his voice from all CREATURES in the WORLD.

He can speak with such light and evidence, or can make such clear appearances of truth to the soul as shall proclaim him to be GOD alone.— GOD's light makes such discoveries of himself to man, and of man's own soul to himself, which no creatures can ever make.

GOD can make man know his excellent purity, beauty, and dreadful grandeur ; and can discover man's debased, deformed heart, as shall astonish and confound the soul itself at its own ugliness.

That divine and celestial light, whereby the sacred word evidences itself to the reasonable minds of those who have their eyes purged well from prejudices, to see and make an honest enquiry, is nothing else but the impress of the majesty, truth, omniscience, wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, mercy, and authority of GOD, stamped upon the scriptures by the Holy Spirit,
and

and beaming or shining into the minds of such persons upon their hearing or perusal, and affecting them with a sense of those perfections both in what is spoken, and in the majestic and God-becoming way of speaking: they speak as never man spake. The matter spoken, and the manner of speaking, has a greatness discernible by a spiritual understanding that satisfies it fully, that God is the speaker,

And all the impressions of God's wisdom, faithfulness, omniscience, and majesty, that are stamped upon the matter contained in the scriptures, being conveyed only by the word, do join the impressions that are upon the word, and strengthen the evidence they give of their divine original, since these impressions do not otherwise appear to our minds, or affect them, than by the word.

The sacred scriptures, by a God-becoming manifestation of the truth that scorns all these little and mean arts of insinuation, by fair and enticing words, and artificially dressed up argumentations, with other the like confessions of human weakness, that are in all human writings, commends itself to the conscience, dives into the souls of men, into all the secret recesses of their hearts; guides, teaches, directs, determines, and judges in them, and upon them, in the name, majesty, and authority of God: and when it
enters

enters thus into the soul, it fills it with the light of the glory of the beamings of those perfections upon it, whereby it is made to cry out, “ The voice of God, and not of man.”

The glorious and wonderful power, whereby the sacred scripture evidences itself to be the word of God and not of man, is nothing else but that authority and awful efficacy which God puts forth in and by it over the minds and consciences of men, working divinely, and producing effects of his glorious and omnipresent power in immortal souls.

It enters into the conscience, a territory or province exempt from the authority of creatures, and subject only to the dominion of God: it challenges, convinces, threatens, awakens, and sets the conscience a roaring; and the whole creation cannot quiet it again: it commands a calm, and the sea that was troubled before is smooth, and devils and men are not able to disturb its repose.

It enters into the mind, opens its eyes, fills it with glorious, clear, pure, purifying light, and sets before it wonders before unknown and undiscerned in counsel and knowledge, concerning God, ourselves, our sin, our duty, our danger, and our relief; the works, the ways, the counsels, and purposes of God.

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It speaks with efficacy to the will, converts it and powerfully disengages it from what it was most connected with, what it embraced and was even glued to before ; so that no art or force of eloquence, argument, fear, or hope, could make it quit its hold : it makes the will hastily quit its embraces of impure objects, and turns its bent another way, the quite opposite road to the former, and with open arms embraces what nothing could make it look to before. This power of GOD's word takes away the aversion of the will, makes it willingly go, yea, run after what it bore the greatest aversion to before, and obstinately refuse to close with any sinful and abominable object.

It enters the affections, makes them rise from the earth and sensual enjoyments ; gives them such a divine touch, that though they may, through their fickle and volatile nature, be carried sometimes by force another way ; yet they never rest, but point heaven-ward, and dart upwards like heavenly fire.

This glorious word of GOD comes into the soul, sunk under the pressure of unspeakable and irretrievable distress, sticking in the miry clay, refusing comfort, and, in appearance, capable of none : the promise of GOD plucks the soul out of the clay, raises it out of the horrible pit, sets its feet upon a rock, fills it with joy, yea, makes

it exceeding joyful; while, even, all outward pressures and tribulations continue, yea, are increased.

The word enters into the soul, lays hold on the reigning lusts to which all the powers and passions had formerly submitted, and that with ardour; and condemns those powerful and daring criminals, makes the soul throw off the yoke, and join in the execution of its sentence against and on them.

Now, where the case is thus stated, how can the soul that feels this powerful word, that comes from the Lord most high, do otherwise than fall down and own, “That God is in it of a truth.” *

Stile is the manner in which any person expresses the conceptions of his mind, and the passions of his heart, by means of language.

Thus the stile of God is the manner in which he expresses his conceptions and affections in the language of the holy scriptures.

Our writers on eloquence observe, that there are three kinds of stile amongst mankind—the simple stile—the middle or equable and temperate—and the sublime. All these kinds of stile God has condescended to use in the scriptures, and in each of them he speaks like a God.

When

* Read Halyburton's nervous and admirable Essay on the Reason of Faith.

When he is pleased to use the simple and plain style, he speaks with the utmost justness and propriety—and in the most lively and engaging manner, so as to allure the imagination and fix the affections, with the most lovely elegance, or such a proper choice of words and expressions which always suit the ideas that GOD designed to convey. His style hath the utmost purity both in the words and expressions—and perspicuity, which serves very much to keep up the attention, where other ornaments are wanting.—A seeming negligence is sometimes a beauty in this style, as it appears more natural.*

When GOD chuses to express himself in the middle or temperate style, you see his conceptions and affections expressed with the utmost gravity and dignity—you see the finest thoughts in the truest beauty and elegance—you observe in all his ideas and expressions a delicacy peculiar to a GOD.

As in the objects of our senses, those things are said to be delicate which affect us gradually in a soft and agreeable manner; so a delicate thought revealed from GOD, is that, which is not wholly discovered at once, but, by degrees, opening and unfolding itself to the mind, discloses more than was at first perceived; just as the minute works of creation, when they are viewed

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* See Dr. WARD'S Lectures on Oratory, vol. II. p. 129—178.