

Indeed, the learned Cudworth acknowledges, that the Athanasians, and the Nicene Fathers platonized, and not the Arians; though he says, that they derived their ideas not from Plato, but from the scriptures*. But of that let the reader judge. The platonizing Fathers, says Le Clerc†, thought, that before the actual generation of the Son, he was *virtually in the Father*, and, therefore, *αὐτοθεός*, whereas the Arians denied this, and said, that he, like other creatures, was produced from nothing.

SECTION VI.

General Arguments against the PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST.

THE preceding history of opinions relating to the pre-existence of Christ affords a very striking argument against that doctrine. But I think it will not be amiss in this place, in order to remove the strong prejudices that have taken place with respect to this subject, to add some other arguments of a *general nature*, such as arise from the known state of things in the apostolic age, and what may be fairly inferred from the apostolic writings, without entering into the discus-

* P. 529.

† See his Edition of Stanley, p. 160.

tion of particular texts of Scripture, for which I beg leave to refer my reader to my *Illustration of particular Texts*, and more especially to *Mr. Lindsey's excellent Sequel to his Apology*; where that worthy man, and valuable writer, has thrown much new light upon many of those passages which have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of the antipre-existent doctrine.

It is acknowledged by all writers, that, at the beginning of christianity, there arose *two* opposite errors concerning the person of Christ. The first, they say, came from the Jewish converts, who maintained that Christ was only *a man*, distinguished by peculiar gifts. "This," says Athanasius, "was an error of the Jews, in the time of the apostles; and, he says, they drew the Gentiles into it." Of these there were two sorts; some called Nazarenes, who believed the miraculous conception, and the other Ebionites, who believed Christ to be born of Joseph and Mary. This is expressly said to have been *the most ancient heresy in the church* *.

"Presently after, however, there arose another error, quite opposite to this, introduced by the Pagan philosophers, who stripped Christ of his human nature. This heresy was one of the first that spread among the Gentiles, and the apostle John

* Beaufobre, vol. ii. p. 517.

“ did all he could to prevent its spread, but
“ in vain*.”

Now, admitting these facts, viz. the existence of the *Nazarene* heresy, and that of the *Docetæ* in the apostolic age, and that the former was prior to the other, I think we may safely infer, from the notice taken of heresy in the New Testament, that the former was not considered as any heresy at all; because there is no mention made of it *as such*; whereas the other is inveighed against, and especially by the apostle John, in the strongest terms; and moreover, as has been shewn above, he evidently speaks of it in such a manner as implies, that he had no idea of any other heresy of consequence in his time.

Against this heresy he writes in the clearest and most express manner, and with the most vehement zeal. Of the other supposed heresy he is so far from taking any notice at all (notwithstanding what has been imagined by some commentators upon him) that he writes exactly like a person who considered Christ as a man, who was so far from being of *the same substance with the Father*, and consequently possessed of any power of *his own*, that he received all his powers immediately from God. And it is remarkable, that those texts which most strongly express the absolute dependence of Christ upon God, and which assert, that all the wisdom and power

* Beaufobre, p. 518.

that appeared in him were the wisdom and power of the Father, and not his own, occur chiefly in the gospel of this very apostle.

Also, the rest of the apostles, instead of taking any notice, direct or indirect, of this capital heresy, as it has been represented, constantly use a language that could not but give the greatest countenance to it; always speaking of Christ as *a man*, even when they represent him in a light of the greatest importance.

This utter silence of the writers of the New Testament concerning a *great heresy*, the very first that ever existed in the christian church, and as it is now represented, the most *dangerous* of all others; a heresy taking place chiefly among the Jews, with whom the apostles had most to do, looks as if they considered the opinion of the *proper humanity of Christ*, in a very different light from that in which it was viewed by their philosophizing successors.

Athanasius, who could not deny these facts, endeavours to account for them, by saying, that “ all the Jews were so firmly persuaded
 “ that their Messiah was to be nothing more
 “ than a man like themselves, that the apostles were obliged to use great caution in
 “ divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ *. But did the apostles

* See his *Epistola de Sententia Dionysii contra Arianos*. Opera, vol. i. p. 553.

spare other Jewish prejudices, which were, at least, as inveterate as this, especially their zeal for the law of Moses, and their aversion to the admission of the Gentiles into the christian church without circumcision, &c. ? And ought not the *importance* of the doctrine to have constrained them to venture a little beyond the bounds of a *timid prudence*, in such a case as this ; especially as the Jewish christians in general, as far as appears, always continued in this error, till their final dispersion, by the civil convulsions that took place in the East, subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem ?

Besides, whether was it more probable that the *illiterate Jews*, who received their doctrine from none but the apostles themselves, and indeed conversed with no other, should have fallen into so grievous an error with respect to the person of Christ, *their own Messiah*, or those who are known to have drawn various opinions from other sources besides the genuine apostolical doctrine, and particularly from that very *philosophy* which, manifestly contrary to any thing that the Jews could possibly have learned from their sacred books, expressly taught the doctrine of the pre-existence of all human souls, and their emanation from the divine mind ; which was, in fact, the doctrine and language of the pretended orthodox Fathers ?

Without examining the merits of the question, *probability* will certainly incline us to
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take the part of the poor Jewish converts, Indeed, their poverty and illiterateness made them despised by the Gentile christians, who were captivated with the *wisdom of this world*: Justin Martyr, however, the earliest Gentile christian writer, speaks of them and their opinions with more respect than they were afterwards treated with. He was one of the first of the philosophising christians, and therefore might know that their doctrines were those of the bulk of christians in his time; and perhaps, at that time, few thought differently from them, besides a few speculative persons like himself*.

2. It is evident, that the most intelligent of the Jews expected nothing more than a *mere man* for their Messiah †; nor can it be said that any of the ancient prophecies give us the least hint of any thing farther. Had the prophecies *not* been *explicit*, there seems to have been the greatest reason why our Lord, or his apostles, should have expressly observed that they were so; or if they had been universally

* See Edit. Thyrby, p. 235.

† “They,” says Trypho (the Jew speaker in Justin Martyr’s Dialogue) “who think that Jesus was a man, and, being chosen of God, was anointed Christ, appear to me to advance a more probable opinion than your’s. For all of us expect that Christ will be born a man from man (ανδρωτων εξ ανδρωτων) and that Elias will come to anoint him. If he, therefore, be Christ, he must, by all means, be a man born of men.” Edit. Thyrby, p. 235.

misunderstood, or *perverted*, we might expect that this should have been noticed by our Lord, as well as other abuses or mistakes which prevailed in his time. Or if a discovery of so great importance would have staggered the faith, or checked the freedom of the disciples of our Lord, when they were fully apprized of the transcendent greatness of the person whom they had considered as a man like themselves, we might have expected that this great discovery would have been made to them, when their minds were fully enlightened by the descent of the Holy Spirit, or at some other time when they were fully instructed in all things relating to the religion they had to teach. And whenever the revelation of a thing so highly *interesting*, and *unexpected*, as this must have been, had been made to them, their wonder and surprise must have been such, as we should have found some *traces* or *intimations* of in their writings.

Nor can it be supposed that a thing of so wonderful a nature as this, could have been announced to the body of christians, who certainly had not, at first, the most remote idea of such a thing, without exciting an astonishment, that could not have been concealed, and such *speculations* and *debates* as we must have heard of. And yet the apostles, and the whole christian world, are supposed to have passed from a state of absolute ignorance concerning the nature of their Lord and Master (regarding him in the familiar light of a friend
and

and brother) to the full conviction of his being the *most glorious of all created natures*; him by whom God originally made, and constantly supported all things, without leaving any intimation by which it is impossible for us to learn, *in what manner* so wonderful a communication was made to them, or of the effects it had on their own minds, or those of others.

At whatever time it be supposed that the apostles were first apprized of the *superangelic nature* of their Master, it might be expected, that so very material a change in their conceptions concerning him, would have been attended with a correspondent change in their language, when they spoke of him; and yet through the whole book of Acts, he has hardly any other appellation than simply that of a man. Thus the apostle Peter calls him*, *A man approved of God*; and the apostle Paul †, *The man whom God ordained*. Nor when we may most certainly conclude, that the apostles meant to speak of him in his highest capacity, do they give him any other title; as when the apostle Paul says ‡, *There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*.

3. Had this Mediator between God and man been of a *middle nature* between God and man. I think one might have expected some *positive declaration* of it, in this or

* Acts ii. 22. † Acts xvii. 31. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

some such place; and that the apostle would not have expressed himself in a manner so unguarded, and which, without some explanation, must necessarily lead his readers into a very great mistake. It is in vain, however, that we look through the whole New Testament for any thing like such an express declaration, or explanation on the subject; and a doctrine of this extraordinary nature is only pretended to be deduced by way of *inference from casual expressions*.

4. It is also with me a very strong presumption against the Arian hypothesis, that no *use* is made by the writers of the New Testament, of so extraordinary a fact, as that of the union of a superangelic spirit with the body of a man. No *argument* or *exhortation* is ever grounded upon it; whereas it might have been expected, that so very wonderful a thing as this must have been *alluded to*, and *argued from*, in a great variety of respects; and especially that the first converts to christianity should have been frequently, and very distinctly informed of the *high rank of their master*; especially as the great popular objection to the christian scheme was the *mean birth* and *obscurity* of its author, and the *disgraceful treatment* he met with in the world. The very few texts in which it is thought by some that arguments are drawn from the pre-existent state of Christ, appear to me to refer to nothing more than the dignity with which he was invested as *Messiah*, after he was *sent*
of

of God, and endued with power from on high, for the important purposes of his mission.

It weighs much with me, that if so extraordinary a thing as the descent of a superangelic spirit, to animate a human body, had been true, it must have appeared, in the course of the history of Christ, that such an extraordinary a measure was *necessary*; as by his acting a part which a *mere man* was either naturally incapable of, or in which there was an obvious impropriety for a mere man to act. But so far are we from perceiving any thing of this in the evangelical history, that nothing is exhibited to us in it, but the appearance of *a man approved of God, and assisted by him*. For, though no man could have done what he is said to have done, *unless God had been with him, yet with that assistance, every thing must have been easy to him*.

If our Lord had, *in himself*, though derived originally from God, any extraordinary degree of wisdom, or peculiar ability of any other kind, for carrying on the work of man's redemption, above the measure or capacity of that nature which God had given to men, he would hardly have declared so frequently, and so expressly as he does, that *of his own self he could do nothing, that the words which he spake were not his own, but his Father's who sent him, and that his Father within him did the works*. This is certainly the proper language of a person who is possessed of no more natural advantage than any other man.

If

If he had any superior powers, abstracted from what he derived from the immediate agency of God, *in what they do appear?*

So solicitous does the Divine Being always appear, that his rational offspring, mankind, should *understand* and *approve* of his proceedings respecting them, that there is hardly any measure which he has adopted, that is of much moment to us, for which some *plain reason* is not assigned by one or other of the sacred writers. Indeed, this is a circumstance that cannot but contribute greatly to the efficacy of such measures. But though, I believe, every other circumstance relating to the scheme of redemption is clearly revealed to us, yet we neither find any reason assigned for so important a preliminary to it, as the *incarnation of the first of all created beings*, nor are we any where given to understand, that this was a necessary preliminary to it, though the reasons for it were such as we could not comprehend. A conduct so exceedingly dark and mysterious as this, has no example in the whole history of the dispensations of God to mankind.

5. Could the history of the *miraculous conception of Jesus* have been written so fully as it is by both Matthew and Luke, and so very important a circumstance relating to it as this have been overlooked by them, if it had been at all known to them? I will appeal to any Arian, whether he himself could possibly have given such an account of that transaction

action as either of these evangelists has given. It must certainly be thought by them to be a capital omission in the account.

6. It has often been observed, and I cannot but think very justly, that the uniform scripture doctrine of the present and future dignity of Christ, being conferred as *the reward of his services and sufferings on earth*, is peculiarly favourable to the idea of his being a man only; and I think the Arians are obliged to strain very hard in order to make out any material difference between the pre-existent and present state of Christ; or to explain the nature of his *reward*, of which so striking an account is always given, if there be no material difference between the two states.

7. It is said that, if it be difficult to explain the reward of Christ upon the Arian hypothesis, it is equally difficult to account for his distinguished reward and future honour and power upon the supposition of his being a *mere man*; these being *too great* in this case, if they were *too little* in the other. But it should be considered, that there is a *natural propriety* in distinguishing a man appointed by God to act the most important part that man could act (and a part, that *no other than a man* could with propriety appear in, respecting the whole human race) in a manner greatly superior to what is conferred on any other man.

It should also be considered, that there are many passages of scripture, which most expressly

pressly say, that, great as is the honour and dignity to which Christ is advanced, his disciples, and especially his apostles, will be advanced to *similar*, if not *equal* honour. And it is remarkable, that there is no one *power*, or *prerogative*, that is mentioned as conferred on Christ, but the same is likewise said to be imparted to his followers.

As to what is called his *glory*, or honour and dignity in general, and the *love that God* has for him, that love and high regard from which those honours proceed, our Lord himself says expressly, that his disciples are on a level with himself. What else can be inferred from his prayer before his death, in which he says*, *That they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,—and the glory which thou gavest me; I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.* Other parts of this remarkable prayer are in the same strain, and it appears to me, that nothing but our having long considered Christ in a light infinitely higher than that of his disciples, has prevented our understanding it as we ought to have done.

Christ is appointed to *raise the dead*, but this is not said to be performed by any pro-

* John xvii. 21.

per power of his own, any more than the miracles of that and other kinds which he wrought when he was on earth, and dead persons were raised to life by the apostles as well as by himself.

Christ is also said to *judge the world*. But even this honour is said to be shared with him by his disciples, and especially the apostles. *Know ye not*, says St. Paul*, *that the saints shall judge the world. And if the world be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters. Know ye not, that we shall judge angels, how much more things that pertain to this life.*

8. The *kingdom of Christ*, whatever it be, is expressly said to *have an end*†. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. — And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.* This is what we should hardly have expected if Christ had been the first of all created beings, by whom all things were made, and who upholds and governs all things.

9. How it may affect others I cannot tell, but with me it is a very great objection to the pre-existence of Christ, that it favours strongly of the Oriental doctrine of the *pre-existence of all human souls*, which was the foundation of the Gnostic heresy, and the source of great

* 1 Cor. vi. 2.

† 1 Cor. xv. 24.

corruption in genuine christianity. For if the soul of one man might have pre-existed, separate from the body, why might not the soul of another, or of all? Nay, analogy seems to require, that the whole species be upon one footing, in a case which so very nearly concerns the *first and constituent principles of their nature*. Besides, the opinion of the separability of the thinking part of man from his bodily frame, even after he comes into the world, is so far from being agreeable to the phenomena of human nature, that it is almost expressly contradicted by them all.

10. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, one of whose principal objects was to reconcile the Jews to the thoughts of a suffering Messiah, seems to make use of arguments which necessarily suppose Christ to have been a man like ourselves; as when he says*, *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*. In this passage the writer seems to consider Christ as a man, in direct opposition to created beings of a superior nature, or angels, under which denomination Christ himself must have been ranked, according to the phraseology of scripture, if he had existed prior to his becoming man; since no other term is made use of, to denote his nature and constitution, as distinct from that of men, or angels.

† Heb. ii. 9.

With this view this writer applies to Christ, that authority and dominion which is ascribed to man, *as distinguished from angels*, by the Psalmist, Pf. viii. 5. *For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place, testified, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the work of thine hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.* As, in this passage, he plainly considers the nature of man as properly characterized by his being *a little lower than the angels*, and he applies the very same expression to Christ, without giving the least hint of any distinction between them, I cannot help thinking, that in the writer's idea, the nature of both was precisely the same.

It is also remarkable, that this same writer speaks of Christ as distinguished from angels, when he says *, *That God had anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows*, by which, therefore, *in this connection*, I do not see how we can help understanding his *fellow men*, or *fellow prophets*.

11. This writer, also, seems to lay particular stress on Christ's having *felt* as we feel, and having been *tempted* as we are tempted; and to assert, that for this purpose, it was ne-

* Heb. ii. 5. &c.

cessary, that he should be, *in all respects*, what we ourselves are*, *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren—and children†, Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. And again‡, Wherefore in all things, it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest §. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* Now, I cannot help thinking from these passages, that the writer had an idea of Christ being much more *what we are*, and consequently of his *feeling* more as we do, than he could have meant, upon the supposition of his being of an angelic, or superangelic nature. For then, the views that he had of his *sufferings*, and consequently his *feelings under them*, must have been exceedingly dissimilar to ours. And every argument that the apostle uses, to shew the impropriety of Christ's being an *angel*, seems to weigh *much more* against his being of a nature *superior to angels*.

12. If it be supposed that, upon becoming an inhabitant of this world, Christ lost all consciousness of his former pre-existent state, I do not see of what use his superior powers

* Heb. ii. 11, &c.

† V. 17.

‡ V. 13, 14.

§ V. 18.

could possibly have been to him ; or, which comes to the same thing, what occasion there was for such a being in the business. Besides, the hypothesis of an intelligent being, thinking and acting in one state, and losing all the remembrance of what he had been and done in another, has something in it that looks so arbitrary and unnatural, that one would not have recourse to it, but upon the most urgent necessity.

It should seem, however, that if Christ did pre-exist, it was not unknown to him in this world, since one of the strongest arguments for this hypothesis is, his praying that *his father would glorify him with the glory that he had before the world was* *. But if Christ did retain a perfect consciousness of his former state, and, consequently, retained all the powers, and all the knowledge of which he was possessed in that state, I have no idea of such an *increase of wisdom* as the evangelist Luke ascribes to him, when he says †, *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*. In the idea of this evangelist, Jesus certainly made such improvements in knowledge, as other well-disposed youths make; so that I think he had manifestly no other idea of him.

13. Similar to the above-mentioned reasoning of the author of the epistle to the

* John xvii. 5.

† Ch. ii. 52.

Hebrews, is that of the apostle John, or rather of that of Christ himself*. *And he hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man*; for I do not see the force of this inference, unless the meaning of it be, that Christ, being a man like ourselves, having felt as we feel, and having been tempted and tried as we have, is the most *unexceptionable* of all judges. No man can complain of it, since it is being judged, as it were, *by our peers*, and by a person who knows how to make every proper allowance for us.

14. Some may possibly lay stress on its being said by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, in the passage above-mentioned, that *Christ himself took flesh and blood*, as if it had depended upon his own choice, whether he would become man or not, which implies a pre-existent state. But the word *μετεχων* is used for *partaking*, or *sharing in*, absolutely, without any respect to *choice*, and is used in that sense in two other passages of this epistle †, where the apostle speaks of the *propriety of the divine designation*, not of the motive of Christ's election. Also in other places, he is represented as *passive* with respect to the same event. Thus, in the ninth verse of the same chapter, it is said, that *Jesus was made a little lower than the angels*, and not that *he made himself lower*, or condescended.

* John v. 27.

† Ch. v. 13. vii. 13.

It is said *, that *Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.* But *επιλαμβανομι*, which is the word here used, properly signifies, and is, in every other place, in the New Testament, rendered to *lay hold upon.* In this place, therefore, the meaning probably is, that Christ did not (after he appeared in the character of the Messiah) lay hold upon, so as to *interpose in the favour of,* or *rescue,* angels, but the seed of Abraham; and thence we see, that the apostle infers, that there was a necessity, or at least an exceeding great propriety, that a Mediator for men should be, in all respects, a man; for he immediately adds, *therefore in all things, it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, &c.*

15. Indeed, there appears to me to be a most evident propriety, that a person who acted so important a part with respect to mankind, as Christ did, who was sent to be our instructor and example, and especially who came to ascertain the great doctrine of a *resurrection from the dead,* should be, with respect to his *nature,* the very same that we ourselves are; that he might exhibit before us an example of proper *human virtue,* and especially that he might die as we ourselves die, and his resurrection be the resurrection of a *man like ourselves;* and so the proper *first fruits from the*

* V. 16.

dead, and consequently of the very *same kind* with those of which the *general harvest* will consist; and thereby give us the greater reason to hope, that because *Christ lives we shall live also*.

16. It is now agreed, both by Arians and Socinians, that the supreme God is the only object of *prayer*; it being acknowledged, that we have no authority in the scriptures for addressing ourselves to Christ: but this restriction cannot be founded upon any other than the Socinian hypothesis, and is by no means reconcilable with the principles of Arianism.

I ought not, in reason, to address a petition to *a man* who may not be within hearing of me; and much less can there be a propriety in numbers of persons, in very distant places, addressing themselves to the same man at the same time, because no man can attend to more than one person, or one thing, at once. But a Being equal to the formation of the world, and especially of the whole system of worlds, and even the universe, or the whole creation; he *by whom all things consist*, that is, who still *supports*, and governs all things, must be *capable* of giving his attention to every thing that passes. Nay, every thing must necessarily be at all times subject to his inspection; and, therefore, there could be no impropriety, *in the nature of things*, in addressing prayers to him.

Besides, it is very obvious to reflect, that if there was any reason, or propriety, that
some

some derived being, and not the Supreme, should be the immediate *maker of the world*, and that the Deity should not himself interpose in the government of it, it can only be this derived being, and not the Supreme, *with whom we have to do*. It can only be to him who *made us* what we are, and who himself immediately *supports* us in being, that we ought to look. A child naturally addresses itself to its nurse, who attends constantly upon it, and not to its mother; and a tenant applies to the steward, who immediately inspects and manages the estate, and not to the owner of it.

In fact, no reason can be imagined why the Supreme Being should delegate to any inferior the making and governing of the world, which would not be equally a reason for his appointing him to hear our prayers. Nothing but the most express declarations, founded on reasons, which I should think impossible to suggest, can authorise us, to admit the former, and not the latter, the connection is so natural. I therefore look upon the undoubted *fact* of all prayer being, upon the plan of revelation, confined to God, exclusive of all inferior beings, and of Christ, to be a most satisfactory argument, that God himself is alone the immediate maker of the world, and that it is he himself who constantly supports and governs it, without the mediation of any such glorious, though derived

rived being, as the Arians imagine Christ to have been before his incarnation.

17. It is said, and certainly with great reason, that it is in vain to preach christianity to Jews or Mahometans, while it is loaded with such a tenet as the doctrine of the *Trinity*, which, it is well known, they both regard as equally absurd and impious; the great and distinguishing principle of the Jewish religion being the *unity of God*, and the great objection that the Mahometans made to the corrupt christianity of the sixth century, being the general departure of christians from the same fundamental principle, as may be seen in the Koran itself. But the principles of Arianism are hardly more reconcilable to the notions of Jews, or Mahometans, than those of Athanasianism; and the following language of the Jew in Limborch's *Callatio*, is applicable to the idea of Christ being the maker of the world, and the person who spake to Moses in the burning bush, as well as to his being strictly equal to the Father. "The prophet," he says, "who
 " pretends to be the true God of Israel, who
 " arrogates divine omnipotence, and gave
 " his own words as the words of God, can-
 " not be admitted; and, supposing what is
 " impossible, that the true Messiah should
 " publish this doctrine, he ought to be ston-
 " ed as a false prophet*."

* See Jortin's Remarks, vol. iii. p. 342.

The conduct which Dr. Jortin, who was himself an Arian, recommends with respect to the Jews, I think to be insidious, unworthy of christian simplicity, and what must be altogether ineffectual. He says, that, “ in
 “ addressing Jews and Mahometans, whose
 “ great objection to christianity is the doctrine of the trinity, no one should attempt
 “ to remove this prejudice, till he has
 “ brought them to believe the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and his character as a
 “ prophet, Messiah, a teacher of truth, and
 “ worker of miracles ; and that then many
 “ things may be observed concerning the
 “ *logos*, the angel of God’s presence, and the
 “ angel of the covenant, from the Old Testament, and from Philo; and from some
 “ ancient Jewish writers*.”

But, in fact, *external* evidence is nothing more than *conditional* evidence with respect to christianity, going upon the supposition, that the things to be proved by miracles are not *incredible in themselves*. The evidence that might be sufficient to satisfy a Jew, that Christ was simply a *teacher sent from God*, and such a Messiah as *their prophecies announced*, would by no means prove to his conviction, that he was the *maker of the world*, and such a Messiah as he was fully persuaded their ancient prophets did *not* foretell, and such a one as it was utterly repugnant to the whole system of his religion to admit.

* Ib. vol. iii. p. 439.

18. Some Arians of the present age, staggered, it may be supposed, with the glaring absurdity of making a man who died upon the cross to be the maker of the world, and one who, even in his lowest state of humiliation, was actually *supporting all things with the word of his power*, and of supposing him to be the person who, with the name and character of *Jehovah*, had intercourse with the patriarchs, spake to Abraham, to Moses, and to all the nation of Israelites from mount Sinai, &c. &c. &c. seem willing to abandon this part of the system; but without considering, that, with it, they necessarily abandon all the advantages for the sake of which the whole system was originally adopted. They likewise disclaim the aid of the very strongest texts on which the doctrine of pre-existence is founded; as the introduction to the gospel of John, which speaks of the logos as the Being *by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made*, Col. i. 5. which speaks of Christ as *the first born of every creature, by whom all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, &c. as being before all things, and by whom all things consist*, and, Heb. i. 3. where Christ is said to be the person *by whom God made the World, or rather the ages, and who upholds all things by the word of his power.*

Upon

Upon the whole, nothing can be more evident, than that this *low Arian hypothesis* has no plausible foundation whatever, except being free from the palpable absurdities of the *high Arian* scheme. Certainly, the person who can explain those texts, which speak of Christ as the *maker and supporter of all things*. without supposing that he pre-existed, can have no difficulty in explaining any other texts, which represent him as *simply pre-existing*. For the most difficult of all the texts are those in which his *creating and supporting power* are expressly referred to. The capital circumstances that recommended the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence, when it was started, were the ideas of the *maker* of the world being the *great restorer* of it, and the giver of the *law* being the author of the *gospel*; so that the same person was the medium of all the dispensations of God to mankind. But when these flattering advantages are abandoned, nothing is left but *simple pre-existence*, without any knowledge, or the least colourable conjecture, that Christ had ever borne any *relation to this world* more than to any other.

It is no less evident, that by abandoning the specious advantages of the proper Arian hypothesis, the low Arians are as far as ever from being able to avail themselves of the advantages peculiar to the Socinian scheme; as the propriety of a man being employed in a business so nearly respecting *men*, his exhibiting

hibiting an example of proper *human virtue*, having a reward capable of being conferred on all his followers; of the same kind of being, viz. a man, both introducing *death*, and the *resurrection of the dead*; of the *first fruits* from the dead being of the same kind with the general *harvest*; and that the great judge of all men should be himself a man.

In fact, therefore, this low Arian hypothesis is intirely destitute both of the strongest texts in favour of pre-existence, and also of every advantage peculiar either to the high Arian hypothesis, or the Socinian, so that no scheme can be more insignificant, or rest on narrower or weaker foundations.

Had such general considerations as these been attended to, the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ could never have advanced so triumphantly as it has done. And such arguments as these ought certainly to weigh more than the supposed *incidental reference* to a doctrine in particular texts of scripture, the interpretation of which is always various and uncertain. Besides, if we confine ourselves to the literal interpretation of particular texts of scripture, there is no system that we may not embrace.

The doctrine of *transubstantiation* is doubly intrenched in such fortifications as these, and so are the gross errors which have now got the name of *Calvinism*, such as *original sin*, *atonement*, &c. and also the doctrine
of

of the *perfect equality of the Son to the Father*. And yet Arians do not find themselves affected by such texts; and, in my opinion, it requires much less judgment to see that the texts on which they lay so much stress are equally insufficient to bear it.

19. If we consider the *practical tendency* of the doctrine concerning Christ, I think we shall find nothing at all in favour of the scheme of pre-existence; but much in favour of the contrary doctrine, which represents him as a man like ourselves. To this purpose I shall quote, with some little addition, what I have said on this subject in the *Discourse on the Corruption of Christianity* *.

“ Much of the peculiar power of the gospel motives to virtue (separate from our acting with a view to obtain the reward of immortality promised in it) arises from just ideas of the nature and offices of Christ, as distinct from those of the Divine Being himself, with which they are too much confounded upon the supposition of the proper Deity, or super-angelic nature of Christ, notwithstanding the different offices ascribed to the divine persons, or rather beings, in the Athanasian scheme.

“ The consideration of *the love of Christ*, has something in it peculiarly endearing, when it is not considered as the same thing with *the love of the Creator towards his creatures*, but

* P. 24.

“ as the love of one, who, notwithstanding his miraculous birth, was as much a man as Adam was, or as we ourselves are; when it is considered as the love of our *elder brother, who bore our infirmities, who felt all the pains and agonies that man can feel; and, being the very same that we are, was in all respects tempted as we are; who, loved us, and freely gave himself to death for us, to redeem us from sin and misery, that we might become partakers of the same love of God, and be joint heirs with him of the same glory and happiness, that we might all alike become kings and priests unto God, even the Father, for ever and ever; who after living many years on earth, in which he manifested the most intense affection for us, is now gone to prepare a place for us in our heavenly Father's house, that where he is, there we may be also; as one who is now exercising a power which, as the reward of his obedience unto death, he received from God, to be head over all things to his church; who still feels for, and will be present with his faithful disciples and followers in all their trials, even to the end of the world.*

“ The esteem and love that we bear to the character which we form of Christ, considered as a man like ourselves, the attachment we have to him, and his cause, and the efficacy of this principle to promote a christian temper and conduct, and
“ to

“ to encourage us to follow this our glori-
 “ ous leader, the *captain of our salvation*, and
 “ the *first fruits from the dead* (even though,
 “ like him, we be called *to lay down our lives*
 “ *for our friends*, and to bear persecution
 “ and torture in the cause of conscience,
 “ virtue, truth, and God) is exceedingly
 “ great, and *peculiar to itself*. It is a kind
 “ of love and esteem that cannot be felt by
 “ one who is truly and practically an Atha-
 “ nasian or Arian, and, in general, but im-
 “ perfectly by those who have long been
 “ Athanasians or Arians; and who, there-
 “ fore, cannot easily get rid of the ideas
 “ they have had of Christ as God, or at least
 “ as a Being who has little in common with
 “ us; who, therefore, could not feel as we
 “ do, act upon views similar to ours, or en-
 “ tertain, and be the proper object of, a
 “ similar and reciprocal affection.

“ A man may have rejected the Athana-
 “ sian or Arian hypothesis a long time,
 “ before these ideas shall even occur to
 “ him, or their power be at all apprehend-
 “ ed. At least we can only expect to feel
 “ their influence at intervals, and must not
 “ hope to experience that amazing force,
 “ which, however, we may easily conceive
 “ they must have had with the primitive
 “ christians, and especially with the apostles,
 “ and others, who personally knew Christ,
 “ and who, therefore, never had an idea of his
 “ being any other than a man like them-

“ selves; though, as Peter expresses himself,
 “ *a man approved of God by miracles and won-*
 “ *ders and signs which God did by him.*”

Upon the whole, I cannot help thinking it to be a capital advantage of the doctrine of *Materialism*, that it leaves no shadow of support for the doctrine of *pre-existence*, or the *Arian hypothesis*, which is totally repugnant to the genuine principles of the christian religion, so as hardly to be brought within the general outline of it; and that the greatest mischief that christianity has derived from the unnatural mixture of heathen philosophy with the principles of it, has been this injudicious exaltation of our Saviour; which, in fact, has been nothing else than setting up the vain conceits of men in opposition to the wisdom of God.

In what I have observed in this section I am far from meaning to detract from the peculiar dignity and just prerogative of Christ. And upon this subject I shall beg leave to quote what I have in my *Discourse concerning the Spirit of Christianity* prefixed to my *Essay on Church Discipline*, p.

“ Our aptness to pass from one extreme to
 “ another, and the inconvenience attending
 “ it, are also felt with respect to our senti-
 “ ments concerning the person and character
 “ of Christ. Upon finding, that instead of
 “ being *very God of very God, the Creator of*
 “ *heaven and earth*, he is only *a man like our-*
 “ *selves*, we are apt at first to under-value
 “ him, and not to consider him in that
 “ dist in-

“ distinguished light in which, though a
 “ man, he is every where represented in
 “ the scriptures; as the great instrument in
 “ the hands of God, of reversing all the ef-
 “ fects of the fall; as the object of all the
 “ prophecies from Moses to his own time;
 “ as the great bond of union to virtuous and
 “ good men, (who, as *christians*, or having
 “ Christ for their master and head, make
 “ *one body*, in a peculiar sense) as introduced
 “ into the world without a human father;
 “ as having communications with God, and
 “ speaking and acting from God, in such a
 “ manner as no other man ever did; and,
 “ therefore, having *the form of God*, and be-
 “ ing *the Son of God*, in a manner peculiar to
 “ to himself; as the means of spreading
 “ divine and saving knowledge to all the
 “ world of mankind; as under God, *the*
 “ *head over all things to his church*; and as
 “ *the Lord of life*, having power and au-
 “ thority from God, to raise the dead and
 “ judge the world at the last day.

“ There seems to be a peculiar propriety,
 “ that these powers respecting *mankind*, should
 “ be given to a *man*; and, it therefore be-
 “ *hoved* our Redeemer, to be *in all things like*
 “ *unto his brethren*, and to be *made perfect*
 “ *through sufferings*; but, certainly the man
 “ who is invested with these powers and
 “ prerogatives should be the object of our at-
 “ tention, reverence, and love, in such a man-
 “ ner as no other man can be, or *ought* to be.”