not have been so sparing of it in their Writings, especially when their Business was to labour for the Benefit and Instruction of Mankind. But there is not one word in all their Writings which favours this Opinion, from whence we may safely conclude, that they had no such Notion; and yet it must not be in the least doubted, but that they were throughly acquainted with the Will of God, and knew more of his secret Counsel than any other Men in the World whatsoever.

§ IX. It must needs be acknowledg'd by us Christians, as well as by the Jews, that Moses was, without Controversie, the greatest Prophet that ever appear'd upon Earth before our Saviour's time, and had the most frequent and greatest Revelations of the Divine Will. For this it was a singular Favour which God vouchsafed the other Prophets, in communicating to them some of the Secrets of his Purposes; yet Moses was the Man whom God chose to be the Instrument of the Deliverance of his People Israel, by such convincing Signs and Wonders, as were undeniable Evidences of the Divine Power by which they were wrought, and who was not only to be God's Messenger to his People in some few Particulars, but the immediate Receiver of that Law, and all the Oeconomy, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, by which God's People

People were to be govern'd without any Addition or Diminution, so many hundred Years, till the Coming of the promis'd Messiah. God himself bears Witness to this, Numb. xii. 6. If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known unto him in a Vision, and will speak unto him in a Dream. My Servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine House. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark Speeches, and the Similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Now Moses had not been faithful in God's House, if he had not reveal'd the whole Will of God to his People, as it was deliver'd to him; which most certainly he did. But how? Why, he commands the People thus, Deut. vi. 17. You shall diligently keep the Commandments of the Lord your God, and his Testimonies and his Statutes which he hath commanded thee; which were, no doubt, the very same which he had receive'd upon Mount Sinai. Nor did this Holy Man, this faithful Servant in God's House, ever recommend, or so much as hint any such Service of God, as is dream'd of by our Mystics, or give the least Encouragement for any to hope for the Gift of Prophecy, or an Intuition or beholding the Divine Being in this State. And yet it is certain that both Moses himself, and Multitudes of others after him, were Heavenly-minded Men, and did that which was acceptable
in the Sight of God, and shall be Partakers of Everlasting Glory.

§. 10. Nor did any of the Prophets, which came after him, ever advance any such refin'd way of Worship; but constantly blamed the People for not observing the Law of Moses, and neglecting the Statutes and Ordinances which he had left them. And the Sum of their Prophecies consists, either in Exhorting, Reproving, Promising or Threatening, and some Hints of the Messiah. But not one Syllable concerning any such abstractive Worship, nor any Mention made of Men attaining the Beatific Vision. Notwithstanding which, there have been, and still are, a great many deluded Souls, who imagine that the warm Conceptions of disordered Brains, are a great Measure of that Holy Spirit by which the old Prophets spake; and pretend to such a Familiarity and intimate Conversation with God; such an entire Communication and Intercourse, that they might, if what they said were true, seem to be glorified Spirits, rather than Prophets, subject to the like Infirmities with other Men; and to have left the Church Militant to take their place in the Triumphant. Not considering, that all this is only a pleasing Fable, or an Amusement, a Fool's Paradise, and grounded upon no better Reason or Foundation, than the Man that was distraught had to fancy himself an Emperor, and all that came about him his Subjects. These Men do not consider that we live in such an Age of the World, as we are not to expect such extraordinary Effusions of the Spirit: All that we can reasonably expect, or that God has promised, is, to give his Holy Spirit to those that ask it of him; that is, to guide them by his gracious Assistance, as that they may overcome their Spiritual Enemies, and be crown'd hereafter with Glory and Immortality; which certainly ought to content any reasonable Man, without aspiring to Immediate Revelation, Prophecy, obtaining the Vision of God, and such like Things, which God has deny'd to us, whilst in this State.

§. 11. Indeed, if it were in Religion, as in Arts and Sciences, it might with a great deal more Reason have been expected; that considering the vast Distance of Time since the first planting of the Christian Religion to this present Age, we might have been improv'd to a Degree of Prophecy. For Arts and Sciences receive their Beginnings from very small Hints at first, and are afterwards improv'd proportionally to the Industry and Capacity of those who cultivate them; and therefore we may reasonably expect, that the longer they continue, the more they will be advance'd. But the case is vastly different in Religion,
which is always best and purest at its first setting out. And there is a very good Reason to be given, why it should be so; for after the first Covenant made by God with Mankind in the Person of Adam; every other Dispensation has found Men under a State of Corruption, and in the actual Possession of Errors, diametrically opposite to those Truths which it came to instruct them in; and therefore it was requisite that the means to remove these at first, should bear Proportion with the Difficulties they were to encounter. Upon which account, at the Beginning of any new Dispensation, those Persons whom God was pleas'd to employ to publish it to Mankind, have been endued with more Zeal and greater Abilities, than the Professors of the same Religion in after Ages. And as no Person can doubt, but that the Jewish Religion was much more perfect in the Days of Mozes, and those which immediately succeeded him, than in after Times, when it was obscure'd and muddied by Pharisaical Inventions and Traditions: So must it also be confess'd, that the Christian Religion was much more perfect in the Days of the Apostles, and the Ages immediately succeeding them, than since it has been obscure'd by the Interest of the Designing on the one hand, and the Prejudice and Ignorance of the Unlearned on the other. And this is what is plainly con-

confess'd by the Practice of most contending Parties amongst the Professors of Christianity; who constantly make their Appeals to the earliest Writers of the Primitive Christian Church, and use all means to bring them over to their own Side; which is an evident Concession that they value their Authority, and look upon them as the most competent Judges of their Controversies. Now, if I shall make it appear, that there was no such thing as is contended for by our Enthusiasts, in those early Times, when the Holy Spirit must be confess'd on all hands to be more plentifully pour'd out than in the succeeding Ages; I hope it will appear evidently to any unprejudiced Person, that it is not at all to be expected under the Christian Dispensation.

§ 12. To begin therefore with our Blest Saviour himself. It is evident that he never recommended any such way of worshipping God, as is contended for by the Mysticks, nor promis'd to reward the most sincere of his Followers with the Vision of God whilst in this State. As for his own Life, which is certainly the most perfect Pattern, it was Active to the greatest Degree; and bating some times of Retirement, to pray or the like, was wholly spent in Conversation, and doing Good to others. Then as to the Substance of his Doctrine, it consisted in acquainting the Jews that he
himself was the Messiah, whose Coming was so long ago, and so often foretold by the Ancient Prophets. He also acquainted them with the Nature of his Office and Mediatorship, and shew'd them how mightily they were mistaken in their Interpretations of the Prophets concerning him. He let them know, that, contrary to their Expectation, his Kingdom was not of this World; but that his Business was to bring Men out of Darkness to Light, and from the Bondage and Slavery of Sin, to the Liberty of the Sons of God. He taught them to abandon all ungodly Lusts, and to set their Hearts upon Things above; assuring them, that if they continued in his Love, they should be rewarded with everlasting Happiness. And left his Disciples, and those Churches which should be planted by their Ministry, should be destitute of necessary Encouragement and Assistance, he assures them in most endearing Terms, of his Love towards and Care over them, and promises speedily to send them * the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, which should not only assure them of his own, and the Father's Love towards them, but also enable them to work such Miracles as should be sufficient to confirm the Truth of their Mission. But no where promises the Enjoy-

* John Chap. xiv, xv, xvi, xvii.

ment of the Beatific Vision here; but bid them to expect their Reward hereafter; assuring them, that if they were not to follow him now, but should follow him afterwards; and that he went to prepare a place for them. Nor did he even mention his having purchased for Mankind such a Privilege, as that they might, by diligently improving what was given them, come to God without any other Means, but rather the quite contrary: For he says, * No Man cometh to the Father but by me; now certainly the way to come to Christ, is to believe in him; which, according to the Apostle S. Paul, presupposes, hearing him preach'd.

§ 13. And as our Blessed Saviour did never promise to reward the Endeavours of Sincere Persons, with such a Power whereby they might attain, without any External Means, all Things necessary to Salvation, much less the Intuition, or beholding the Divine Presence whilst in this Life; so neither do we find that they either expected or enjoyed it. The Method of God in teaching his People, was still the same as it ever had been, viz. by revealing his Will to some few, in order to the having it communicated by their Ministry to others. And I desire any one that thinks other-
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wife, to produce me one single Instance of any Person that came to the true Knowledge of God, and the necessary means of Salvation, but by this way. The contrary is evident from the Example of the Eunuch (Acts viii.) who was a devout Person, and well disposed; and we find his Zeal and Sincerity rewarded by God's sending to him a proper Person to instruct him.

§ 14. Which is still further confirm'd by the Example of Cornelius (Acts xi.) who being a devout Man, and one that feared God with all his House, and gave much Alms to the People, and pray'd to God always, was so far accepted by God, that he was graciously pleased to provide Means for his further Instruction in his Duty, and sent Peter to instruct him. Whereby he has plainly pointed out to us the way by which he would have us seek for the Knowledge of him, viz., by applying our selves to such as he has appointed to teach his People. Accordingly we find that Cornelius's Alms and Devotions, and incessant waiting upon God, did neither advance him to the Beatific Vision, nor so far as to have those Truths presented to him by way of Object, immediately, which were necessary to be believed by him in order to his Salvation; neither is he at all encourag'd to look for or depend up

onVision or Intuition, but is fain to a Man-like himself, to hear with his outward Ears, those things which concern'd his Eternal Welfare. Whereas, if God had ever granted to Mankind a Power whereby he might, by due Application and Attention, attain to a sufficient Knowledge of God, and Things necessary to Salvation; or, if such a Privilege, though deny'd before, had been purchas'd by Jesus Christ; there is no question, but Persons so extraordinarily well qualified as these two good Men, Cornelius and the Eunuch, were, would have enjoy'd the Benefit of it; and then the Event would have been, that by their constant attending upon God, and unwearied Diligence in meditating and practising good Things, they would have increas'd in Spiritual Knowledge, and made nearer Approaches to God, till they had attain'd to Perfection. But we find nothing like this, but that on the contrary they were oblig'd to be instructed by the same means which God had appointed for other Men.

§ 15. And then as to matter of Vision, the whole Tenor of the Apostle's Doctrine runs counter to it. S. Paul tells us, that all those noble Actions which were perform'd by the Ancient Worthies (Heb. xi.) were done thro' Faith; which as himself defines, it (v. i.) is, The Sub
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£6. ASPE OND of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen. It is an Assent which we give to Things as true, which we can neither apprehend by our Senses, nor demonstrate by our Reasoning; so that the only Objects of our Faith are such Things as we receive upon the Credit of another; which, how far it is from Vision, is evident to common Sense. And the same Apostle tells us, that now we see through a Glass darkly; and that we know in part, and prophesi in part.

$ 16. Hence it is plain, that all those Texts which speak of the plentiful Eulogium of the Spirit in the times of the Gospel, are quite misunderstood by all those, who interpret them after such a manner, as if God had given such a Measure of it to all Mankind, that upon a due Improvement of it, they might attain to the Knowledge of him, and of all Things necessary to Salvation. Whereas it appears, that even in the earliest Times of the Gospel, there was no such thing; but then all the Churches were planted by the Ministry of the Apostles, who ordained others to succeed them in their Office. If therefore in those Times it was not granted, it is a ridiculous Absurdity to expect it in this Age; and no small

† Cor. xiii. 12, 9.

Degree, either of Impudence or Madness to pretend to it.

$ 17. Since it is not foreign to the Matter in hand, the Reader will, I hope, pardon me if I digress a little, to shew why we cannot reasonably expect Prophets now. And it seems to me, that there are several Reasons to be given why there should be Prophets during the time of the Mosaical Dispensation, rather than after the Gospel had taken Root. For, the Promises made to the Jews having Relation to their possessing the Land of Canaan, God was pleased to send them Prophets to quicken their Memories, and keep them in mind of their Duty, that thereby his Judgments might be averted from them; and especially, because of the prevailing Idolatry of those Times; for after they were well fix'd in the Practice of the True Religion, and out of that Danger, we find no Prophets;) and we find that most of the Ancient Prophecies tend that way. But now we are quite upon another Bottom; we are taught, that we have here no continuance City; that, when these Tabernacles shall be dissolved, we have a Habitation not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. That we are to set our Minds on Things above, not on Things on the Earth; that we are to deny our selves, and take up our Cross and follow Christ; that, through many
many Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and many Passages to the same Effect. So that to have Prophets foretelling future Events, relating to the Welfare and Preservation of our Temporals, or the contrary, seems not to proper for a People, whose very Profession supposes them to have laid aside all Solicitude concerning them. Again, before the Coming of Christ, God's Will was but imperfectly reveal'd; and it was necessary that there should be Fore-runners to prepare the way against his Coming, and raise the Expectation of him in the People, that they might be the better prepar'd to receive him. But after he was once come, who was to compleat and fulfill all; after God, * who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, had, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed Heir of all things, &c., who was the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person, &c. I say, after God had, by this glorious Person, manifested and reveal'd his whole Will to us, and declar'd whatsoever he requireth to be believ'd and done by us, whilst in these Mortal Bodies; there was no longer need of Revelation to those who had receiv'd the most perfect one that could be deliver'd.

* Heb. 1:1.