

THE  
DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN,  
ACCORDING TO  
SCRIPTURE, REASON, AND EXPERIENCE.

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## PREFACE.

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1. A FEW years ago, a friend put into my hands Dr. Taylor's "Doctrine of Original Sin," which I read carefully over and partly transcribed, and have many times since diligently considered. The author is doubtless a person of sense, nay, of unusually strong understanding, joined with no small liveliness of imagination, and a good degree of various learning. He has likewise an admirable command of temper, so that he almost everywhere speaks as one in good humour. Add to this, that he has a smooth and pleasing, yet a manly and nervous, style. And all these talents he exerts to the uttermost, on a favourite subject, in the Treatise before us; which he has had leisure for many years to revise, file, correct, and strengthen against all objections.

2. So finished a piece surely deserves the consideration of all those masters of reason which the age has produced. And I have long hoped that some of those would attempt to show how far the doctrine there laid down is true; and what weight there is in the arguments which are produced in confirmation of it. I know not how to believe that all the Clergy in England are of the same opinion with this author. And certainly there are some whom all his skill in Greek, and even in Hebrew, does not make afraid. I should rejoice had any of these undertaken the task, who are, in many respects, better qualified for it; particularly in this, that they have time

upon their hands; they have full leisure for such an employment. But since none else will,\* I cannot but speak, though lying under many peculiar disadvantages. I dare not be silent any longer: Necessity is laid upon me to provide those who desire to know the truth with some antidote against that deadly poison which has been diffusing itself for several years through our nation, our Church, and even our Universities. Nay, one (I hope, only one) Father of the Church has declared that he knows no book more proper than this to settle the principles of a young Clergyman. Is it not time, then, for "the very stones to cry out?"

3. For this is not a point of small importance; a question that may safely be determined either way. On the contrary, it may be doubted whether the scheme before us be not far more dangerous than open Deism itself. It does not shock us like barefaced infidelity: We feel no pain, and suspect no evil, while it steals like "water into our bowels," like "oil into our bones." One who would be upon his guard in reading the works of Dr. Middleton, or Lord Bolingbroke, is quite open and unguarded in reading the smooth, decent writings of Dr. Taylor; one who does not oppose, (far be it from him!) but only explain, the Scripture; who does not raise any difficulties or objections against the Christian Revelation, but only removes those with which it had been unhappily encumbered for so many centuries!

4. I said, *than open Deism*: For I cannot look on this scheme as any other than old Deism in a new

\* Since the writing of this, I have seen several Tracts, which I shall have occasion to take notice of hereafter. There are likewise many excellent remarks on this subject in Mr. Hervey's Dialogues.

dress; seeing it saps the very foundation of all revealed religion, whether Jewish or Christian. "Indeed, my L—," said an eminent man to a person of quality, "I cannot see that we have much need of Jesus Christ." And who might not say, upon this supposition, "I cannot see that we have much need of Christianity?" Nay, not any at all; for "they that are whole have no need of a Physician;" and the Christian Revelation speaks of nothing else but the great "Physician" of our souls; nor can Christian Philosophy, whatever be thought of the Pagan, be more properly defined than in Plato's word: It is *θεραπεία ψυχῆς*, "the only true method of healing a distempered soul." But what need of this, if we are in perfect health? If we are not diseased, we do not want a cure. If we are not sick, why should we seek for a medicine to heal our sickness? What room is there to talk of our being renewed in "knowledge" or "holiness, after the image wherein we were created," if we never have lost that image? if we are as knowing and holy now, nay, far more so, than Adam was immediately after his creation? If, therefore, we take away this foundation, that man is by nature foolish and sinful, "fallen short of the glorious image of God," the Christian system falls at once; nor will it deserve so honourable an appellation, as that of a "cunningly devised fable."

5. In considering this confutation of the Christian system, I am under some difficulty from Dr. Taylor's manner of writing. It is his custom to say the same thing (sometimes in different, sometimes in nearly the same words) six or eight, perhaps twelve or fifteen times, in different parts of his book. Now, I have accustomed myself, for many years, to say one and the same thing once only. However, to comply with his manner as far as possible, I shall add, at proper inter-

vals, extracts from others, expressing nearly the same sentiments which I have before expressed in my own words.

6. I am sensible, in speaking on so tender a point as this must needs be, to those who believe the Christian system, there is danger of a warmth which does no honour to our cause, nor is at all countenanced by the Revelation which we defend. I desire neither to show nor to feel this, but to "speak the truth in love," (the only warmth which the gospel allows,) and to write with calmness, though not indifference. There is likewise a danger of despising our opponents, and of speaking with an air of contempt or disdain. I would gladly keep clear of this also; well knowing that a diffidence of ourselves is far from implying a diffidence of our cause: I distrust myself, not my argument. O that the God of the Christians may be with me! that his Spirit may give me understanding, and enable me to think and "speak as the oracles of God," without going from them to the right hand or to the left!

*LEWISHAM,*

*November 30, 1756.*