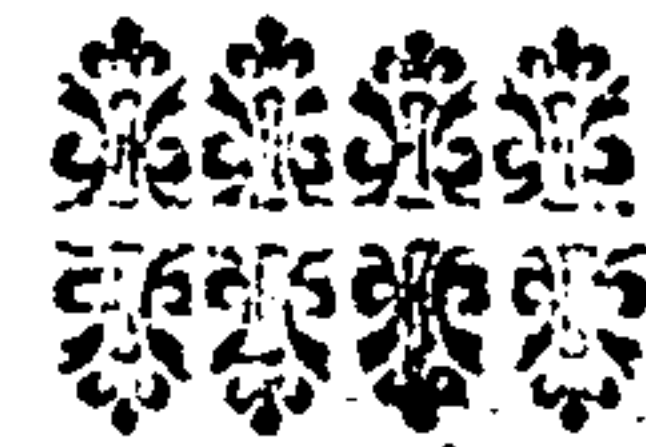


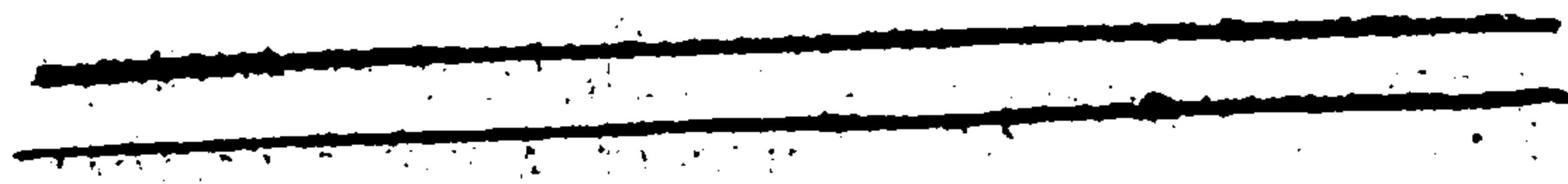
THE
REASONABLENESS
AND
CERTAINTY
OF THE
Christian Religion.

BY
ROBERT JENKIN,
Chaplain to the Right Honourable the EARL
of *EXETER*, and late Fellow of *St. John's*
College in *Cambridge*.



L O N D O N,
Printed for *Peter Buck*, at the Sign of the *Temple*,
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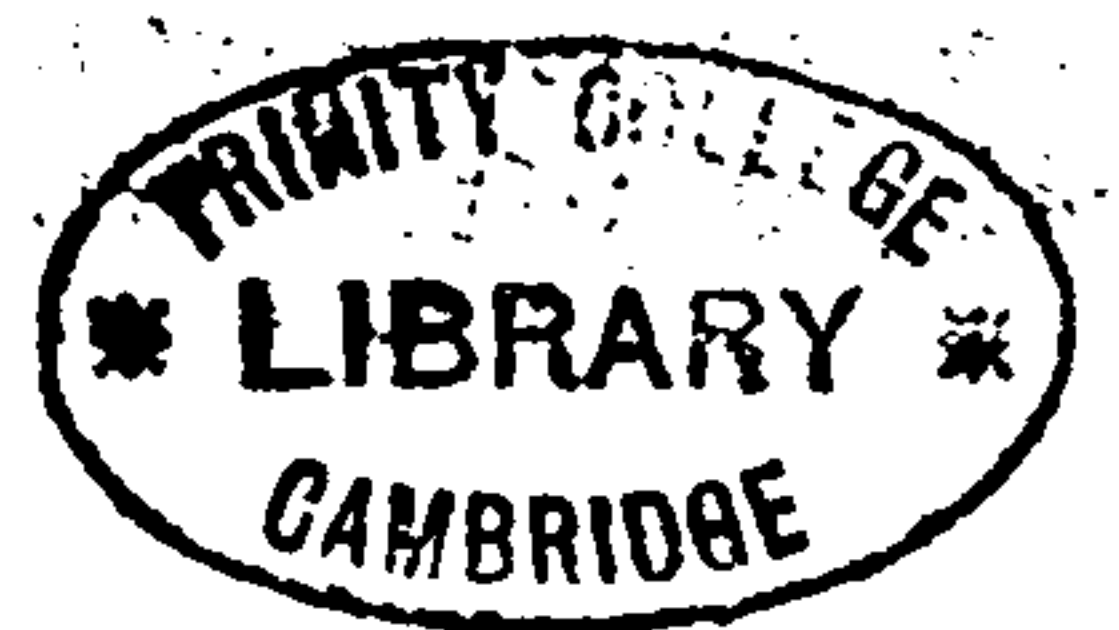
T O
The Right Honourable,
J O H N
EARL of *EXETER*.



May it Please Your LORDSHIP,
THE general Decay and Con-
tempt of the Christian Religion
amongst us, has made me think,
that I could not better employ the Leisure,
which, by Your Lordship's favour, I
enjoy, than in using my best Endea-
vours to shew the Excellency and the
Certainty of it. And what I have done,
is here humbly presented to your Lordship,
as of Right, and upon many Accounts, it
ought to be.

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THE EPISTLE

The Honour and the Satisfaction which I have often had to hear Your Lordship speak in the behalf of Religion and Vertue, encourage me to hope, that a Performance, though but such as this; upon that Subject, may obtain your Acceptance. And the Name only of a Person of your Lordship's Honour, and Learning, and Knowledge of the World, may perhaps be of more advantage to the Cause I undertake, than any thing I have been able to write.

Religion may seem, by Descent, and as it were, by Inheritance, to belong to Your Lordship's Care: The Wisdom and Piety of Your Great Ancestor appear to distant Ages in the Reformation, which, through the Blessing of God, was in so great a measure, by His means, establish'd in this Kingdom. And I have with joy often thought, that I could observe the Spirit and Genius of my Lord Treasurer BURGHLEY now exerting it self more than ever in your Noble Family. From whence, methinks, we may presage Happiness

DEDICATORY.

piness to the Nation, and may yet expect to see a true sense of Religion revive, and may hope, that even in our days, Christianity, amongst English-men, shall be more than a Name, which is every where spoken against.

An eminent Vertue is a Publick Good: There is a powerful and commanding Force in Great Examples, to countenance Vertue, and discourage Vice and Profaneness; to make Irreligion appear, as it is, base and contemptible in the World; to degrade it, and thrust it down among the lower and untaught part of Mankind. Much is not to be expected from the Schools and from the Gown, under such Contempt and Discouragement. But the Great and the Honourable have it in their power to do great things; things worthy of Themselves, and for the advancement of God's Glory. Persons of High Birth, and both by Nature and Education fitted for the Highest Undertakings, whose Vertues shall flourish with their Years, and add New Lustre to their Hereditary Honours,

The EPISTLE

noters, may yet regain a due esteem to Religion, and adorn the Gospel of Christ. This is a proper Object for the Ambition of generous aspiring Minds to express their Gratitude to Him who has placed them so much above the rest of the World; and when they find themselves happy now, to disdain to aim at any thing less than Everlasting Happiness hereafter. To be Miserable after Happiness, is an aggravation of Misery: but to receive Eternal Blessings, as the Fruits and Improvement of such as are Temporal, is the Privilege of those whom God has been pleased to distinguish from others by his Mercies, and who distinguish themselves by a regard to his Honour and Service.

*All that know Burghley, (and who is there almost that doth not know it?) are surpris'd with wonder and delight, to observe what Art can do, and to behold the Splendour and the Magnificence of foreign Countries in our own: But the Glories and Rewards of Vertue shall continue, when Burghley it self and the
World*

DEDICATORY.

World shall be no more; and will make Death but a Passage and an Advancement from one Palace, from one Honour to another; and a Removal only from the uncertain Riches and imperfect Felicities of this Life, to the Mansions of Eternal Bliss in Heaven.

That these my Endeavours may prove but in any measure serviceable to the Ends of Religion and Vertue, and thereby to the Glory and Happiness of your Honourable Family, in this and a better World, is, My LORD, the unfeigned Desire and Prayer of,

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

Most Humble, and

Most Obedient

Servant and Chaplain,

R. JENKIN.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

I Am sensible, that the Publication of a Treatise of this nature, will be liable to Exceptions, from those for whose Use and Benefit it is chiefly design'd, who will be ready to lay hold of all Pretences, to avoid the being convinced of what they have so little mind to believe. They will be apt to say, That if the Truth of Religion be so certain, and so evident, as it is maintained to be, there could be little need of so many Discourses upon this Argument; for it is no sign of Certainty, when such a number of Books are publish'd of this kind, that so many Men of Learning and Parts have written upon the Subject, yet others, it seems,

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are not satisfied in their Performances, but are continually offering something New upon it. They will likewise object, That many of the Professors and Ministers of Religion, do not live as if they believed themselves, at least, not as if they were so very certain of what they teach; and that if there were so great Certainty, there never could be so many Unbelievers, but all who had heard of it, must needs be convinced by such Evidence. I shall therefore shew here, That the Number of Books written on this Subject, doth not prove the Uncertainty of Religion, but rather the contrary; and that the ill Lives of Men, is no argument against the Religion they profess: And then I shall enquire how it comes to pass, that a Religion which carries so plain and convincing Evidence along with it, should yet by too many be disbelieved, or disregarded.

I. To the First thing, it might be sufficient to say, That the Number of
Wri-

Writers, is a great Confirmation of the Truth of our Religion; since as many as have undertaken the Proof of it, have always agreed in the main Evidence, and differ only in Method, or in the Management of particular Arguments: and though all have not written with equal strength and clearness; yet there is not, I believe, one Author, but has brought sufficient Arguments to confute the Adversaries of Religion. They are pleased, indeed, to think otherwise: but they may at least take notice, how obvious it is, that if this Objection prove any thing, it must prove, that there is no such thing as *Certainty* in the World; because there is no Art nor Science, concerning which divers Treatises are not daily published. But are therefore the Natures of Vertue and Vice uncertain? Is it the less certain, whether Justice, Temperance, and common Honesty, be Vertues; or whether Murther, Adultery, and Theft, be Crimes; be-

cause Laws are made, and Sermons daily preached concerning these things? or can any Man doubt, that these Crimes often meet with severe Punishments even in this World, though Man will take no warning by never so many Examples, but have need of continual Advice and Exhortation to keep them from the commission of them? Is there the less Certainty in the Mathematicks, because *Euclid*, *Apollonius*, and innumerable others, of all Ages and Nations, have put forth Books and Systems of Mathematicks in several Forms and Methods.

When many write upon the same Subject, it is an argument of the Excellency and Usefulness of it; not that they are dissatisfied in what has been already said by others, but that they think more may be said, or that some things may be proved more clearly, in another method, with more advantage to some Capacities, and with greater probability of removing the Scruples
of

of some Men. It is, undoubtedly, very fit, that all necessary Doctrines, upon which the Eternal Happiness or Misery of Mankind depends, should be treated of in all kinds of Ways and Methods; and they cannot be too often discoursed of, nor by too many Men, that no Objection may remain unanswered, nor Scruple unobserved. Though a *little* may be sufficient, upon a plain Matter, to wise Men; yet too much cannot be said upon a Subject wherein all Men are concerned: And it is the great Assurance of the Truth of Religion, and Charity to the Souls of Men, that has engaged so many Authors in this Cause.

Besides the Primitive Fathers and Apologists, Men of the greatest Learning and Abilities, in latter Ages, have undertaken this Subject, having made it their Study and Business to consider the Grounds of our Holy Religion. And I think few will pretend to more Judgment to discover Truth, or to

more Integrity to declare it, than such Authors who have had no particular Interest or Profession in reference to Religion, but were under only the common Obligations of all Christians; which if they had valued as little as some others, they could with as much Wit and Learning have appeared in the Cause of Irreligion, as any that ever undertook it. Many of the most eminent in all Professions and Callings have been the most zealous Assertors of Religion; as I might shew by particular Examples which are in every Man's memory. Indeed, I believe, few Men have so vain an Opinion of themselves, as to think they understand their several Studies and Professions better than such Persons who have given undoubted evidence of their unfeigned Belief of the Christian Religion. Men of the greatest Sagacity and Judgment have not been moved with such Objections as others so much stumble at; but have lived and died
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the Glory of their Age, and an Honour to their Religion; such were the Learned Prince of *Mirandula*, and that Learned French Nobleman *Mornans*; such were *Grotius*, Sir *Matthew Hales*, Dr. *Willis*; and many besides, both of our own and other Nations. I shall mention but one more, who indeed was so eminent, that I scarce need mention him, for he must be already in every Reader's thoughts; I mean, the Honourable Mr. *Boyle*, who was as inquisitive, and as unwilling to be imposed upon, and knew as much of Nature, perhaps, as ever any Man, not Inspired, did; and had withal as stedfast a Belief, and as awful Apprehensions of Revealed Religion; which he endeavoured to establish and propagate, not only by his own Writings, but by the Labours of others, which he engaged and rewarded by his Last Will and Testament.

2. But Men do not always live answerably to what they profess to believe.

lieve. It were heartily to be wished, that there had never been any occasion given for this Objection: For though it be very inconsiderable in it self, yet it does, I believe, the most mischief of any; because Men naturally govern themselves more by the Example than by the Judgment of others, or even than by their own Reason. But if we will judge aright, the Example of one Man, who lives according to the Doctrines of Religion, ought to be of more weight with us, than the Example of never so many, who live contrary to their Profession. Because, when Men profess one thing, and act another, their Actions are surely as little to be regarded as their Profession: And if we will not believe their Profession against their Actions, why should we regard their Example against their avowed Principles and Profession? It is in all other cases esteemed a good Argument for the Truth of any thing, when Men confess

sefs it against themselves. And the Motives and Temptations are visible, by which they are led aside from their own declared Faith and Judgment; this Pleasure, or that Profit, is the cause of it, which every Man can point to. But when he, who lives conformably to his Principles, denies himself, when he loses and suffers by it, he must needs be in great earnest; whereas the others are apparently bribed, to forsake that in Practice, which, notwithstanding, they cannot but own in the Theory and Principles.

This was an old Prejudice against Philosophy, That the Philosophers did not observe their own Precepts. But it was rejected by wise Men, as no Argument against the Truth and Usefulness of Philosophy. It is a great Objection against the Men, but sure it can be no Argument against the Things themselves, that they are disregarded by those who understand their worth, and pretend to have a due value

value and esteem for them. And whoever renounces the Faith, or takes up Principles of Irreligion, because of any ill Practices of others, too plainly declares either that in Truth and sincerity he never had any, or that he is very willing to part with his Religion. All Men make some pretence to Reason; and those Men most of all, who are so apt to decry Religion upon this account, That many who profess to believe it, do not always live up to its Rules and Instructions: But they do not consider, in the mean time, That Men generally act as much against Reason as against Religion; and that therefore this Objection, if it can signify any thing, must banish all Reason and good Sense out of the World. If there be no True Religion, because so few practise it as they ought; there can be no True Reason neither, because the Lives of so many Men contradict it. And some, perhaps, would be contented, that there should be no True
Reli-

Religion, rather than that there should be no True Reason; because then they must be no longer allowed to be able to Reason against Religion.

But if the Truth and Reality of Things depend upon the Practice of Men, then the same Religion may be true and false at the same time; it may be true in one Age, and false in another; or true in one Countrey, and false in the next; and must be more or less true or false, in the same proportion, as the Lives and Manners of its Professors are more or less vertuous or vicious. Indeed, this is so unreasonable and unjust a Prejudice against Religion, though it be grown a very common one, that methinks every Man should be ashamed of it; especially Men of Reason, who scorn so much, in all other cases, to depend upon the Practice and Authority of others. And it is hard to believe, that Men who think at all, can think as they speak, when they make use of this Objection.

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Will any Man suppose, that Temperance doth not preserve Health, tho' he should see his Physician run into excess? or, that Poyson will not kill, tho' the Man who tells him so, and advises him against it, be so desperate as to take it himself?

But as absurd as this Objection is in it self, it is most of all absurd, when it is urged against the Christian Religion; of which we are assured, that one of the Twelve who first preached it, was an Apostate, and a Traytor: and our Saviour declares, that many who had Preached and wrought Miracles in his Name, should be at last rejected by him, *Matth. vii. 21.* And therefore, for any to make this cavil against Christianity, is only to shew, that they do not consider it, or will not remember the plainest and most remarkable Points of it.

3. The causes of Unbelief amongst Christians, notwithstanding the clearest Evidence for their Religion, are too many

many to be here recounted: But I shall mention some of the chief of them.

(1.) Vicious Men are very unwilling to believe that Religion to be True, which is so directly contrary to their whole course of Life, and to all their Inclinations and Desires, but they are very ready to catch at any Cavils and Pretences against it. The Lives of too many Christians have brought a Scandal, though a very unjust one, upon the Religion which they profess: and Men who find themselves more inclined to do as they see them do, than as they hear them acknowledge they ought to do, make no sufficient enquiry into the Principles of Religion.

(2.) Divers men have had a strange Ambition to say something new upon every Subject they treat of; and in order to that, have set themselves, with all their Skill and Power, to contradict and overthrow what has been said by others, that they might make way for their own Opinions; or to to refine upon

upon the Notions of others, that that might appear New, and of their own Invention : which has made inconsiderate men conclude, that we are always to seek in our Doctrine, and have no fix'd Principles : whereas men of Learning and Judgment know, that commonly what is with so much ostentation proposed and recommended to us for New, has been considered and rejected of old, though not, perhaps, in the very Terms, yet in the Sence and Substance of it ; or else it is some True Doctrine under a different Form and Manner of Expression.

The Improvements which have been made in Philosophy, this last Age, afford a real and great advantage towards the Proof and Establishment of Religion in Mens Minds ; and yet there are few things which have been more abused to the dishonour of it. For when men find it convenient to give some vent to the Philosophical Humour,

mour, they bethink themselves of a fit Subject for it to discharge it self upon ; and this must be something Great, and something that is very New and Surprising : and there is nothing which answers all these Qualities so well as a new Account of the Origin of the Universe, and then the History of the Creation in *Genesis*, as well as the World it self, must undergo all the Alterations which they are pleased to impose upon it, that it may perfectly submit and comply with their New Hypothesis. If this Fancy should hold, New Systems of the World will be as common as new Romances : They must pardon me the Expression ; for *Des Cartes* himself, among his Friends, gave no better Name to his System ; which was the first ground and occasion to all the rest. And nothing is more easie with a Philosophical Wit, than to build or destroy a World : but it is to be hoped, when they have wearied themselves

selves with New Contrivances, they will let us have our Old World again. In the mean time, these Men, who have too much Philosophy to have no Religion, put dangerous Weapons into the Hands of those who have neither the one nor the other, and know not how to use them but to do mischief. And there is nothing so plain, but it may be rendred difficult and obscure to many Men, by long and subtile Disputes. If great numbers of Men should write concerning the Sun's Heat and Light, and Motion for many Years, and every one should still contradict all that went before him, and strive to say something New and Strange upon the Subject; the last, for ought I know, might pretend to prove, that perhaps there may be no Sun at all: Which, indeed, is no more than what the Scepticks have said. And this Infidelity and Scepticism concerning God, and his Providence, and Revelation, must end
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in the Scepticism of our very Senses, if these Principles be pursued in their direct and unavoidable Consequences.

Others have been too bold with the Mysteries of Religion, and have pretended to explain them so far, as if they would endeavour to present us with a Religion without all Mystery, which at the same time has exposed Themselves to Reproach, and Religion to the Scorn of such as are glad to take all occasions to shew their Goodwill to it. The evident and declared Design of the *Socinians*, is, to retain no Mysteries, but by forced Interpretations of Scripture to expound them all to their own, that is, to a new and absurd sense; and it is but too plain, that there is a combined Design carried on between Them and the *Deists*, who are contented to pass for Christians, with a Distinction, and without a Mystery: *Anti-Trinitarian* is a milder word than *Anti-Christian*, and *Unitarian* is but a different Name for *Deist*.

Another sort have been very laborious in finding out Mysteries, where there are none ; and under a pretence of reducing the plainest Doctrines to clear Principles, have only amused and confounded Men in the true and obvious Notions of them. Thus the Duties of Love to God, and to our Neighbour, are plain in themselves, and are as plainly set down in the Scriptures : And to raise abstracted and Metaphysical Speculations upon so plain Texts, is only to tell us what we know before, in other and less intelligible Terms, or else to fall into the nice and rash Disputes of the School-men, or into the Enthusiastick Heats of the Mystical Divines ; which can have no tendency to the Peace or Edification of the Church, but gives an occasion to the Adversary to Blasphe-
peme.

(3.) A Third cause of Infidelity, has been the Rashness of some Criticks. For if any thing relating to Religion
has

has been once called in question, by Men who have got themselves a Name, by writing more boldly than wiser Men have done, the Authority of such Men shall be thought a sufficient Answer to all the Arguments which can be taken from any thing which they are pleased to dislike. Criticism, when it falls to the share of a prudent Man, is, without doubt, a necessary and most valuable part of Learning : But it must be confess'd, that there is hardly any thing more impertinent than an impertinent Critick. It is a great thing, if it be well considered, to set the Bounds, and fix the Territories of Learning, to adjudge to every Author his own Works, and say, that this Book, or perhaps some small part of a Book, shall be his, and the other he shall have nothing to do withal. This is no trivial matter, nor of small consequence, and ought not to be at the pleasure of any one who has a mind to be taken notice of,

for contradicting the received Opinion, and being more confident than others. And the less Occasion there is for these Criticks, the more Danger there is from them, for if there be no work for them, they will be apt to make themselves work: And what Author will be able to stand before Men, whose business and ambition it is to find fault? But though the Jurisdiction of Criticks be very large and absolute; yet I have taken care not to come under it, but have purposely avoided insisting upon any Authorities which have fallen under their Disputes, unless it be, perhaps, in speaking of the *Sibyls*; but there I have the consent of the best Criticks, besides evident Reason, on my side, so far as I am concerned for them.

(4.) A Pretence to Miracles and Prophecies, without Reason or Ground for it, in behalf of some particular Errors, has weakened the Belief of the True Miracles and Prophecies: and
whilst

whilst laborious Endeavours have been used to shew, that the Christian Religion cannot be true, unless those Doctrines be true, which have no foundation in it; the quite contrary has happened to what in charity we must suppose these Authors designed: for instead of owning their Religion to be true; Men, who are convinced of the weakness of their Pretences, have taken them at their word, and have been forward to grant them, that there is no Religion true, and therefore not theirs.

(5.) I shall shew at large, in due time, That the many Differences and Disputes in Religion, are no prejudice to the Truth and Certainty of it; but they are, notwithstanding, a great scandal and temptation, and a great hindrance to the Salvation of Men, especially as they are commonly managed; whilst by all imaginable Arts and Means, Men of different Parties and Opinions strive to run down their

Adversaries. Those who are concerned, would do well, I should think, to consider what mischief may ensue, through the imprudent and unchristian management of Disputes, even in a right Cause; which has no need of such methods; and therefore they are the less excusable, who use them in defence of such a Cause. If we would convince or persuade Men in any other thing, we never are wont to think it a proper expedient to use them ill, and give them hard words: And is rough Usage proper only for the propagation of the Doctrines of the Gospel, and of a Religion of Peace, and Meekness, and Charity?

I know what Examples may be produced to countenance this Practice; but those great Authors have Excellencies enough for our imitation, we need not imitate their Faults. Our Blessed Saviour, indeed, himself, and his Apostles, did not always forbear severe language; but then they spoke
with

with a Divine Power and Authority, and knew how to speak to the Hearts, as well as to the Ears of Men, and fully perceived when this was the last and only Remedy to be used; they could strike dead with their Words, and were infallible in the use of such Expressions as were proper for the present occasion, either to comfort or to terrify Sinners, and awaken them to Repentance. There is no doubt, but a seasonable Reproof or Rebuke, though it be very severe, may be not only consistent with Charity, but may also be the Effect of it; and if ever we may speak with the Power and Authority, as well as in *the meekness and gentleness of Christ*, we must do it when the Truth of the Christian Religion is called in question, and that by Christians. We live in an Age in which Men think they have done a great thing, and enough for them to value themselves upon, if they can but start a bold Objection against the

Scriptures, though it have never so little sence in it. We have sufficient warrant to treat these Men as they deserve: for the Apostles were commanded (according to a Custom in use amongst the *Jews*) to *shake off the dust off their feet*, against such as rejected their Doctrine: and the least we can say to them, is to let them know, that if they will not believe, we are sorry for it, but cannot help it, and that they will have the worst of it. Mr. *Hobbs* himself will allow, that an Atheist ought to be banish'd as a Publick Mischief, and scarce any Terms can be too severe for those who openly apostatize from the Religion in which they have been baptized, and blaspheme that Holy Name by which they are called. We must not so debase the Gospel of Christ, as to seem to beg their Approbation, which, I'm sure, we have little need of, in the present case. I am far from thinking any thing small or inconsiderable, in
which

which the Honour of God, and the Truth of Religion is concerned; but certainly a great distinction is to be made between them from whom we differ in particular Points, though of great moment and consequence, and those who reject the Whole. Our chief Zeal and Strength should be employed against the Common Enemies, who delight in our Quarrels, and sport themselves with mutual Wounds we so freely give one another.

(6.) We have a sort of Men amongst us, who from hence have taken occasion to make it their whole Business, both by their Discourses and Writings, to laugh all Religion and Morality out of the World: which has made our very Wit to degenerate, though this be the only thing for which these Men seem to value themselves; and our Poems, with all their soft Numbers, and flowing Style, to be far from deserving Commendation: for this way of Writing is as much
against

against the Rules of Poetry, as against those of Vertue; and they can never answer it to their own Art, whatever they may do to their Consciences; but ought to be censured for being ill Poets, as well as ill Men. A fine Saying, a soft or bold Expression, or a pretty Character! is this all we have in exchange for our Reason and Religion, which these Men have so laboriously decryed! Some of the best Poets of our Age have been so sensible of the Dishonour hereby done to God, the Disservice to Mankind, and the Disgrace to so Noble an Art, that they have employ'd their Genius a better way. But the extravagant Raillery against Religion has been the more licentious, and the more frequent, not only because it has met with Applause from so many, who are none of the wisest part of Mankind, but because it is the easiest way of Wit, flowing so naturally from the very Temper and Inclination of corrupted

rupted Minds; and any smart Reflection may easily be taken from another Subject, and applied here with advantage, because it looks more extravagant and daring, and surpriseth for no other reason, but for the bold irreverent use of it. What is there in Religion, if it were untrue, that can seem ridiculous? What, in the awful Majesty of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, that can provoke the Laughter and Mockery of any but Fools and Mad-men? It is not obvious to conceive, why it should be thought a greater argument of a Man's Parts, to revile his God, than his Prince; to speak Blasphemy, than it is to speak Treason; or why the Wit should atone for the Crime more in the one case than in the other. But the truth is, a very moderate share of that will serve the turn in both cases. *Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the God of Jacob.*

(7.) And

(7.) And indeed, from the Wit and Drollery of some, others have taken the confidence to proceed to Arguments, but they are very far from being either strong or plausible; for I never in my life observed so much Disingenuity, so vain an affectation of Learning, and so groundless a pretence to Reason, as in these Men. The Extravagancies of *Cardan* are known to all that ever heard of him: The Lust, and Pride, and base Flattery of *Vaninus*, is every where visible. *Aut Deus est, aut Vaninus*, is such an expression, as no Man besides ever used in a Dialogue of himself. And Mr. *Hobbs's* love of Singularity, and Spirit of Contradiction, is evident from his own Confession; and my late Lord *Clarendon*, who knew him well, has acquainted the World both with the Temper and Design of the Man, and with the Errors of his Writings. But I shall come down lower, and examine a little the Arguments

guments of later Writers, who would take it ill, if it should be thought that they have not retained and improved all the profound Reasonings of their Predecessors in Irreligion, which we may expect to find abridged in a Book bearing the Title of *The Oracles of Reason*, a Rhapsody of Letters, and some small Tracts of divers Men.

But here I need not much concern my self with what is taken out of the Authors of *Religio Medici*, and of the *Archæologia Philosophicæ*; because these Authors, notwithstanding those Objections, profess an unfeigned Belief of Revealed Religion, in these very Books, though the Transcriber did not think fit to acquaint his Reader with such Professions, for fear of bringing an Antidote with his Poyson: But since those Objections were so far from having that effect upon the Authors themselves, all that they can serve for, is to shew, that they can make a Deist of none but a weak or an ill Man.

I re-

I refer the Reader to the Preface of *Religio Medici*, to see how disingenuous it is to quote any thing from that Book, as the fix'd and mature Thoughts of Sir *Thomas Brown*. But as if this had not been Disingenuity enough, we have him brought in, saying the quite contrary to what we find in his Book. (a) *How all the Kinds of Creatures, (says Sir Thomas) not only in their own Bulks, but with a competency of Food and Sustenance, might be preserv'd in one Ark, and within the extent of Three hundred Cubits, to a Reason that rightly examines it, will appear very feasible.* Thus it is both in the Book it self, and in the Annotations upon it; but our (b) Transcriber has made the Author say quite contrary, that *this will not appear very feasible.* What is transcribed likewise from the same Author's Book (c) of *Vulgar Errors*, is not fairly cited, and no notice is taken, that this learned Author has a whole Chapter,

(a) *Relig. Med.* par. 1. §. 22.

(b) *Oracles of Reason*, p. 5.

(c) *Ibid.* p. 5.

ter, in that very Work, concerning (d) the Temptation of *Eve* by the *Serpent*; where that is cleared, which was (e) before brought only as an Objection, and transcribed by Mr. *Blount*. How the Translator has dealt with the Author of *Archæologia Philosophicæ*, I have not his Book by me to examine, he is living to vindicate himself. One thing I have observed, that Mr. *Blount* assures us, that (f) *this learned Author doth a strenuously affirm, as 'tis possible, that the World had a Beginning about Six thousand Years since; whereas the Translation which this Gentleman sends Mr. Gildon with his Letter, says, (g) That to prescribe the Divine Creation so short an Epocha as the limits of Six thousand Years, 'tis what he never durst.* Now, either Mr. *Blount* or the Translator are mistaken in their Author, and I rather think the latter must mistake him. For whenever the World had been created, there must have been a time when it had existed but

(d) *Vulg. Errors*, l. 5. c. 4.

(e) *Ibid.* l. 1. c. 1.

(f) *Oracles of Reason*, p. 3.

(g) *Ibid.* p. 73.

but Six thousand Years ; and then the shortness of the *Epocha* might have been objected, as well as now. So that there was no possibility of preventing this Objection, unless the World could have been Eternal ; which was likewise impossible, from the Nature of Time, which being successive, necessarily implies a Beginning ; and as this Author, by his Translator, speaks in that place, *we cannot form to our selves any Idea of a thing created from Eternity.* But what is cited out of either of these Authors, will fall under some of the Heads which are to be treated of in another Book which I design upon this Subject ; I shall therefore here only single out such Particulars as are the proper Notions and Conceits of our Deists, and of which I had no thought or occasion to speak elsewhere.

(b) 151.
p. 160.

Mr. Blount (b) will have the Prophecy of *Jacob*, concerning the Scepter's not being to depart from *Judah*, till
the

the Coming of Shiloh, to have been first applied to the *Messiah* by the *Cabbalists* in the time of the *Maccabees*, and not to have been expounded of *David's Line*, till the Reign of *Herod*, at least not generally ; for here he is not so positive, as a Man might have been in a thing purely of his own Invention. But doth he bring any Proof or Probability for what he says ? No, it is meer Conjecture, contrary to all the most ancient Expositions of the Jewish Writers. But the *Jews* had a *Cabbala*, and the *Pharisees* hated *Herod*, and the *Herodians* flattered him, and *Josephus* flattered *Vespasian* ; and therefore from some Circumstances superficially framed and put together, he will needs gather the Uncertainty of this Prophecy, and conclude, that it is contradicted by others, without any consideration had to what so many have sild to reconcile them. In the same place, he says, that the *Jews* reckon the Book of

c

Daniel

Daniel among their Hagiographa or Sacred, but not Canonical Books. Father *Simon*, to whose Writings I suppose this Gentleman was no Stranger, might undeceive him in this matter; his words are these, (i) *Novi quidem Judæos de germanâ vocis illius (ceturvim) significatione inter se non convenire: etsi omnes sentiant Ceturvim, seu Hagiographos non minùs divinos esse & canonicos, quàm reliquos veteris instrumenti libros:* and he plainly proves his Assertion.

(i) *Castigat. ad Opusc. Isaacii Vossii.*
p. 238.

(k) *Oracul. of Reason,*
p. 221.

The same Gentleman (k) tells us, that *Josephus* confesses, That he durst not presume to compare the Nation of the Jews with the Antiquity of the most ancient and inallible Writings of the *Ægyptians, Chaldeans and Phœnicians.* For which he refers his Reader to *Josephus contra Apion. lib. 1.* Where he will find the quite contrary; for *Josephus* makes it his business to confute the Heathen Historians, and to vindicate the Jewish Antiquities against them,

them, and to shew how they contradict themselves and one another, in what they relate of the Jews, different from the Scriptures. (l) And yet this notorious Mistake is again repeated by our Author; which any one may confute, that will but look into *Josephus.* The Design of his First Book against *Apion*, is, to prove the Truth of the Jewish Antiquities against the Greeks, from the Writings of the *Ægyptians, Phœnicians and Chaldeans.* *Josephus* says, He wonders at those, who think that the Greeks alone ought to be regarded in Matters of Antiquity; whereas there was nothing to be found among them of Ancient Date: their Cities, their Arts, their Laws, were but of late Original, and their Histories later than all these. But the Greeks themselves confess, that there were very ancient Accounts of former Times among the *Ægyptians, the Chaldeans, and the Phœnicians;* (m) For I omit, says he, for the present, to put our own Nation

(l) *Anima Mundi,*
p. 25.

(m) Ἐὖ δὲ ἢ
μὲν ἐν
τοῖς συγ-
τάξεσιν.

Nation into the number with them. This is far enough from saying, that he durst not presume to enter into a Comparison ; for he doth shew soon after, that the *Jews* had taken as much care in the writing and preserving their Antiquities, as these Nations, or any other, could possibly do. But it had not been to his purpose to mention the *Jews* in that place with the rest ; because he brings his Argument from the confession of Foreign Historians, who were acknowledged by the *Greeks* to be of much greater Authority in things of this nature, than they could pretend to themselves.

(n) *Orac.*
of Reason,
p. 218.

(n) A little before, having translated something out of *Ocellus Lucanus*, to prove the World Eternal, this Gentleman thus subjoins, *Now it is very much, that this Author, Ocellus Lucanus, (who, for his Antiquity, is held to be almost Contemporary with Moses, (if not before him) should have so different a sentiment of the World's Beginning from that,*

that, which Moses had : methinks, if Moses his History of the Creation, and of Adam's being the First Man, had been a general received Opinion at that time ; *Ocellus Lucanus*, who was so ancient and so eminent a Philosopher, should not have been altogether ignorant thereof. But what shall we say, if *Ocellus Lucanus* was not so ancient, but of no Antiquity in comparison of *Moses* ? then, methinks, this Author might have spared his Pains and his Inferences. And of what Antiquity *Ocellus Lucanus* was, is shewn by *Ludovicus Nogarola*, who translated this Piece of *Ocellus Lucanus* into Latin, and publish'd it with his own Observations upon it. For he makes it appear, from *Plato*, that the Ancestors of this *Ocellus* being banish'd from *Troy*, under *Laomedon*, came to *Myra*, a City in *Lycia* ; but *Laomedon* was the Father of *Priamus*, in whose time, as every body knows, happen'd the Destruction of *Troy* ; and *Jair* was then

then Judge of *Israel*, about Three hundred Years after they had been in possession of the *promised Land*. He farther shews, from *Lucian*, that *Ocellus Lucanus* was a Scholar of *Pythagoras*; who lived, sure, long enough after *Moses*, to save our Author's Criticism, or to expose it. Indeed, the best Account we have in Heathen Antiquity, agrees exactly with the History of *Moses*, concerning the Creation of the World. *Aristotle* (o) himself was not satisfied in his own Doctrine of the Eternity of the World, and he (p) confesses, that all the Philosophers asserted the Creation of it: and as for the manner of the Creation, (q) he says, it was esteemed a very ancient Doctrine, and thought, by some, to be the Doctrine of the most ancient Theologists, That it was formed out of Water. It is certain, that (r) *Thales*, the first Greek Philosopher who treated of these things, one of the Seven Wise Men of *Greece*, and the Wisest of them,

(o) *Grot. de Verit. Annot. ad c. 7. l. 1.*

(p) *Aristot. de Caelo, l. 1. c. 10.*

(q) *Meta-phys. l. 1. c. 3.*

(r) *Tull. de Nat. Deor. l. 1. De Legib. l. 2.*

them, in *Tully's* judgment, taught, That God formed all things out of Water.

The same Gentleman has observ'd, (s) That the Epicurean Deists labour to have their Vices imputed rather to a Superiority of their Reason above that of others, than to a Servitude of their Reason to their own Passions; which shews, Vice is naturally esteemed a base and low thing, It is but too plain, that this was his own case, as his unhappy Death declared.

This, I think, is sufficient to shew, how little this Book deserves the vain Title of *The Oracles of Reason*: it will be hard to meet with any Book, which has less right to so high a Pretence. I shall take notice but of one thing more, and that is, (t) *Mr. Gildon's* Attempt to prove the Materiality of the Soul; his Arguments are as unlikely to prove it, as most I have seen: but I shall shew the Notion to be absurd in itself, and impossible to be maintained.

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The Essence of all Matter must be the same, whether Extension, or any thing else, be assign'd as the Essence of it; and though we may be ignorant of the Essence of Matter, yet we know it cannot be essential to it to Think: for then all Matter would necessarily Think. But the difference in the several sorts of Matter can be only in Accidents, that is, in Bulk, Rest, Motion, Situation, and Figure, none of which can render Matter capable of Thought. For if a different *Bulk* of Matter could produce Thought in it, and the Subtile Matter should be able to Think and Reason, though the Gross cannot; then the Parts of a Stone would think, when it is ground to Dust; though when they are joined and compacted together, they make up a Body, as unlikely to think, as any thing we can imagine. If *Rest* could cause Matter to think, a Stone would be the most thinking Creature in the World. If *Motion* could

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could cause it, then that which moves with most quickness, would think most, as Fire, and the Sun, and Stars: but Motion is only a successive change of Place, and there is no reason why Matter should think in one place, rather than in another; or why it should think, when it is moved in a Right Line, or in a Circle, or in any Curve Line, rather than when it lies still. Again, There is no reason why Matter should be able to think, or not think, according to its *Situation* or *Position*; why it should think in the Brain, rather than upon the Trencher; or when it is digested, and reduced to Animal Spirits, rather than when it is in a more compacted Substance, and has a different relation to the parts of Matter about it. Lastly, If any sort of *Figure* could produce Thought, Stones must certainly think, as well as the best of us; and so, indeed, might any thing else: for what Body is there that may not

not subsist under all varieties of Figure ?

Neither can any lucky conjuncture of all these together produce a Power and Faculty of Thinking. For, imagine what Bulk, Rest or Motion, Situation and Figure you can, to meet together, they are all alike incapable of so much as one Thought ; since there is nothing in the Nature of any of these Accidents or Modifications of Matter, but it is as far from any Power of Thinking, as Matter it self is ; and therefore Thinking can no more arise from a combination of them together, than it can proceed from the amassing together of Matter. All the Accidents, but Motion, have nothing Active or Operative in them, but are only Matter under different Modes and Relations. And Motion, whatever the Figure, or Bulk and Contexture of any Body may be, can be but Motion still : and suppose what Contexture or Modifications you will ;
 . what

what is Motion, under all Determinations, Collisions and Combinations, but change of Place ? and, how can change of Place produce Thinking, under any variety of Contexture in the Particles of Matter ? Free-will is impossible to be accounted for by Matter and Motion, as *Epicurus* found, who was therefore forced to have recourse to his *Declinationes Atomorum* ; for which he is so justly exposed by *Tully*. For neither can Matter determine its own Motion, nor can Motion determine it self, but must be determined by something External ; whereas all men find it in their power to determine themselves by an Inward and voluntary Principle.

It is true, indeed, that the Soul, in its Operations, depends very much upon the Temperament of the Body : yet the Soul, even in this state, has Thoughts, which have no Relation to the Body, or any Material Thing ; as Thoughts of God and Spirits, its
 own

own Reflex Thoughts, or Consciousness of its own Operations. And if it were now capable of no Thoughts, but such as have some dependance upon the Body ; yet this can never prove, that the Soul it self is Material, or that Matter Thinks. A Man writes with his Pen, and cannot write without one ; Is it therefore his Pen properly that writes, and not the Man ? The Body is the Instrument of the Soul, in its Operations here ; and as the Instrument is fit or unfit, so must its Operations be more or less perfect.

But it is strange, that the chief part of us should be of such a Nature, that we can form no *Idea* of it. We may form an *Idea* of it, though but an imperfect one : And do we not know, that the Eye, the noblest part of the Body, cannot see it self, but imperfectly, and by Reflexion ? And let any Man try, whether he can form a better *Idea* of a Material Soul, than
of

of an Immaterial one. But this Writer, by *Idea*, seems to mean a Material *Idea*, or Imagination : and we cannot, indeed, form a Material *Idea* of an Immaterial Spirit. Yet, after all which he, or any Man else, has said, the Nature of the Soul is as clearly understood, as that of the Body : and there is nothing encumbered with greater Difficulties than Extension, if that be the Essence of Matter ; and if that be not, it is as hard still to know what the Essence of Matter is. The Instance which he brings of *Brutes*, is easily answered, Whether they can think, or not. If they cannot, the Objection falls of it self : If they can, I should rather suppose, that their Souls may be annihilated, or may transmigrate and pass from one Brute to another, than that the Souls of Men must be Material, that the Souls of Brutes may be Material too.

(u) Mr.
Locke's
Human
Under-
standing,
l. 4. c. 3.
§. 6.

Letter to
the Bishop
of Worcest.
p. 66.

Another Gentleman, of late, has asserted, (u) That it is *impossible for us, by the Contemplation of our own Idea's, without Revelation, to discover whether Omnipotency hath not given to some Systems of Matter, fitly disposed, a Power to Perceive or Think*; and, That there is a Possibility that God may, if he pleases, super-add to Matter a Faculty of Thinking: which is what he likewise calls a *Modification of Thinking, or Power of Thinking*. But it seems not intelligible, how God should super-add to Matter this Faculty, or Power, or Modification, of Thinking, unless he change the Nature of Matter, and make it to be quite another thing than it is, or join a Substance of another Nature to it. But the Question is, Whether a Faculty of Thinking can be produced out of the Powers and various Modifications of Matter? And we can have no more conception, how any Modification of Matter can produce Thinking, than we can, how
any

any Modification of Sound should produce Seeing: all Modifications of Matter are the same, as to this Point; and Matter may as well be made no Matter by Modifying, as be made to Think by it. This is just as if a Man should maintain, That though all Immaterial Substances are not extended and divisible, yet some of them may possibly be, or Omnipotence may super-add to them a Faculty of Extension and Divisibility: for Immaterial Substances may become Divisible and Material by the same Philosophy: by which we may conclude, that Matter may Think; which is the same thing as to become Immaterial, and to surpass all the Powers and Capacities of Matter. But though I have, upon this occasion, mention'd this Gentleman here; yet it would be a great Injury done him, to rank him with the Authors of *The Oracles of Reason*.

There is prefix'd to these Pieces, an Account of the Life and Death of
that

that unhappy Gentleman, Mr. *Blount*, with a pretence to vindicate his Murder of himself, because his deceased Wife's Sister refused to be marry'd to him; by all the Topicks and Arguments of Reason and Philosophy. Which is such an Undertaking, as I am confident was never heard of before, to prove, that a Man may very gravely and Philosophically kill himself, if a Woman, whom he ought not to marry, will not be his Wife. It is strange to see, that Men should think it fit to vent such things as these in the Face of the World: but this discovers the *Reason* and *Philosophy* of these Men, and is a fit Preface to such a Book. *This Wisdom descendeth not from Above.* Behold the Men in their Principles and Practices, the demure Pretenders to Humane Reason, and Moral Vertue, and the Enemies of Revealed Religion!

We are fallen into an Age, in which there are a sort of Men who have shewn
so

so great a forwardness to be no longer Christians, that they have catch'd at all the little Cavils and Pretences against Religion; and, indeed, if it were not more out of charity to their own Souls, than for any credit Religion can have of them, it were great pity but they should have their wish: for they both think and live so ill, that it is an argument for the goodness of any Cause, that they are against it. It was urged, as a confirmation of the Christian Religion, by *Tertullian*, that it was hated and persecuted by *Nero*, the worst of Men: And I am confident, it would be but small Reputation to it, in any Age, if such Men should be fond of it. They speak evil of the things they understand not; and are wont to talk with as much confidence against any point of Religion, as if they had all the Learning in the World in their keeping, when commonly they know little or nothing of what has
d been

been said for that against which they dispute. They seem to imagine, that there is nothing in the World, besides Religion, that has any difficulty in it : but this shews how little they have considered the Nature of Things, in which multitudes of Objections and Difficulties meet an observing Man in every Thought. And after all, Religion has but one fault (as they account it) which they have been able to discover in it, and that is, that it is too good and vertuous for them ; for when they have said all they can, this is their great quarrel against it ; and (as it has been truly observed) no charity less than that of the Religion which they despise, would have much care or consideration for them.

Thus have some Men dishonoured Religion by their Lives ; some by an affectation of Novelty ; some by invalidating the Authority of Books relating true Miracles and Prophecies,
and

and others by forging false ones : some again, by their too eager and imprudent Disputes and Contentions about Religion, whilst from hence others have taken the liberty to ridicule it, and to dispute against it, but so as to expose themselves, whilst they would expose Religion. And thus has the clearest and most necessary Truth been obscured and despised, whilst it has been betrayed by the vanity and quarrels of its Friends, to the scorn and weakness of its Enemies.

However, in all their opposition and contradiction to Revealed Religion, I find it asserted by these Men, that Atheism is so absurd a thing, that they question whether there ever were, or can be an Atheist in the World. I have therefore here proved, from the Attributes of God, and the Grounds of Natural Religion, that the Christian Religion must be of Divine Revelation ; and that this

Religion is as certainly true, as it is, that God Himself exists; which is the plainest Truth, and the most universally acknowledged of any thing whatsoever. And because there is nothing so true or certain, but something may be alledged against it, I shall besides discourse upon such Heads as have been most excepted against: In which I shall endeavour to prove the Truth, in such a manner, as to vindicate it against all Cavils; though I shall not take notice of particular Objections, which is both a needless and indeed an endless labour, for there is no end of Cavils: but if the Truth be well and fully explained, any Objection may receive a sufficient Answer, from the consideration of the Doctrine against which it is urged, by applying it to particular Difficulties; as one Right Line is enough to demonstrate all the variations from it to be Crooked.

It

It is very easie to cavil and find fault with any thing; and to start Objections, and ask Questions, is even to a Proverb esteemed the worst sign that can be of a great Wit, or a sound Judgment. Men are unwilling to believe any thing to be true, which contradicts their Vices; and the weakest Arguments, with strong Inclinations to a Cause, will prove or disprove whatever they have a mind it should. But let Men first practise the Vertues, the Moral Vertues, which our Religion enjoins, and then let them disprove it, if they can: nay, let them disprove it now, if they can, for it stands in no need of their favour; but, for their own sakes, let them have a care of mistaking Vices for Arguments, and every profane Jest for a Demonstration. I wish they would consider, whether the Concern they have, to set up Natural against Revealed Religion, proceed not from hence, that,

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by

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by Natural Religion, they mean no more than just what they please themselves, or what they judge convenient in every case and occasion: whereas Revealed Religion is a fix'd and determined thing, and prescribes certain Rules and Laws for the Government of our Lives. The plain truth of the matter, is, that they are for a Religion of their own contrivance, which they may alter as they see fit; but not for one of Divine Revelation, which will admit of no change, but must always continue the same, whatever they can do. Unless that were the case, there would be little occasion to trouble them with Books of this kind; for the Arguments brought against the Christian Religion, are indeed so weak and insignificant, that they rather make for it; and it might well be said, as *M. Paschal* relates, by one of this sort of Men, to his Companions, *If you continue to dispute at this rate, you will certainly*

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certainly make me a Christian. I shall venture, at least, to say of this Treatise, in the like manner as he doth of his, That if these Men would be pleased to spend but a little of that time, which is so often worse employed, in the perusal of what is here offered, I hope that something they may meet withal, which may satisfy their Doubts, and convince them of their Errors.

But though they should despise whatever can be said to them, yet there are others, besides the profess'd Adversaries of Revealed Religion, to whom a Treatise of this nature may be serviceable. The truth is, notwithstanding the great Plainness of the Christian Religion, I cannot but think, that Ignorance is one chief cause why it is so little valued and esteemed, and its Doctrines so little obeyed: A great part of Christians content themselves with a very slight and imperfect Knowledge of the Religion they

they profess ; and are able to give but very little Reason for that, which is the most Reasonable thing in the World ; but they profess it rather as the Religion of their Country, than of their own choice ; and because they find it contradicts their sensual Desires, they are willing to believe as little of it as may be ; and when they hear others cavil and trifle with it, partly out of Ignorance, and partly from Inclination, they take every idle Objection, if it be but bold enough, for an unanswerable Argument. Whereas, if Christians were but thoroughly acquainted with the Grounds of their Religion, and sincerely disposed to believe and practise according to them, they would be no more moved with these Cavils, than they would be persuaded to think the worse of the Sun, if some Men should take a fanſie to make that the Subject of their Railery. To have the more doubtful and wavering thoughts

thoughts of Religion, because it is exposed to the scorn and contempt of ill Men, is as if we should despise the Sun for being under a Cloud, or suffering an Eclipse ; not knowing that he retains his Light, and Religion its Excellency still, though we be in darkness ; the Light may be hid from us, but can lose nothing of its own Brightness, though we suffer for want of it, and lie under the *shadow of Death.*

The Consideration of the Grounds and Reasons of our Religion is useful to all sorts of Men : for if ever we would be seriously and truly Religious, we must lay the foundation of it in our Understandings, that, by the rational conviction of our Minds, we may (through the Grace of God assisting us) bring our Wills to a submission, and our Affections to the obedience of the Gospel of Christ ; and the more we think of, and consider these things, the more we shall
be

be convinced of them, and they will have the greater power and influence in the course of our Lives. For tho' the Truth of the Christian Religion cannot, without great sin and ignorance, be doubted of by Christians; yet it is a confirmation to our Faith, and adds a new Life and Vigour to our Devotions, when we recollect upon what good Reasons we are Christians, and are not such by Custom and Education only, but upon Principles which we have thoroughly considered, and must abide by, unless we will renounce our Reason with our Religion.

And what Subject can be more useful, or more worthy of a rational and considering Man's Thoughts? These things, which are now made matter of Cavil and Dispute, will be the Subject of our Contemplation, and of our Joy and Happiness to all Eternity in the other World. We shall then have clear and distinct

distinct apprehensions of the Means and Methods of our Salvation, and shall for ever admire and adore the Divine Wisdom, in the Conduct and Disposal of those very Things about which we now are most perplex'd.

T H E
C O N T E N T S.

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that there must be some Divine Revelation.*

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ERRATA.

ERRATA.

IN the Preface, pag. 1. l. 14. read *when though such*; p. 4. l. 5. r. *Men*; p. 14. l. 2. for *that* r. *they*; p. 25. l. 11. r. *the mutual*. In the Book, p. 13. l. 17. for *mind* r. *knowledge*; p. 38. l. 30. r. *before, or at the same time, or after*; *ibid.* l. ult. r. *if before, or at the same time*; p. 66. l. 13. dele the Comma at *Fire*, and place it after *Chaldeans*; p. 96. l. ult. r. *And Kimchi and after him*; p. 100. l. 18. dele *for*; p. 113. l. 10. r. *was soon*; p. 130. l. 16. r. (*which was likewise produced by Kircher.*) p. 133. marg. r. *Tavern. Voyage de Perse*; p. 136. l. 27. r. *Mahomet*; p. 140. l. 11. r. *Ages ago* p. 154. l. 1. for *greater* r. *better*; p. 176. l. 10. for *performed* r. *preserved*; p. 230. l. 3. r. *the Books of the Prophets*; p. 252. l. ult. r. *Device*; p. 290. l. 23. for *repeated* r. *done*; p. 321. l. 6. r. *denied*; p. 322. l. 26. r. *Saul*; p. 331. l. 28. r. *wrought*; p. 372. l. 2. for *of* r. *to*; p. 393. l. 10. r. *particular*; p. 403. l. 19. r. *and Eusebius besides makes*; p. 405. marg. r. *Quint. Instit. lib. iv. p. 407. l. 11. r. dangers only*; p. 408. l. 8. r. *a final*; p. 416. l. 9. r. *Adulteries*; *ibid.* in marg. r. *Horat. Serm. lib. i. sat. 2. Cic. pro M. Calio*; p. 422. l. 16. for *this* r. *that*; p. 426. l. 29. dele Comma at *Phercydes*; p. 431. l. 31. r. *to avoid the being a Stoick*; p. 434. l. 30. r. *in it*; p. 436. l. 19. for *them* r. *Men*; p. 440. l. 18. for *Inspiration* r. *Revelation*; p. 464. l. 13. r. *Testimony of others*; p. 470. l. 17. r. *sincere*. p. 54. l. 2. r. *1601*.
Other mistakes, as *Idaa* for *Idea*, *Ascension* for *Ascension*, *Miltiades* for *Miltiades*, *Spartianus* for *Spartianus*, &c. are left to the Reader's candour.

p. 198. l. 27. f. year r. week.

THE

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THE
REASONABLENESS
AND
CERTAINTY
OF THE
Christian Religion.

BOOK I.

PART I.

IN Discoursing of the *Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion*, I shall use this Method : I. I shall shew, That from the Notion of a God, it necessarily follows, that there must be some Divine Revelation. II. I shall enquire into the Way and Manner by which this Revelation may be suppos'd to be delivered and preserved in the World. III. I shall shew,
B That

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That from the Notion of a God, and the Nature and Design of a Divine Revelation; it follows, That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are that Divine Revelation. IV. That no other Books or Doctrines whatsoever can be of Divine Revelation. V. I shall from hence give a Resolution of our Faith, by shewing, That we have the same Evidence for the Truth and Divine Authority of the Scriptures, that we have for the Being of God himself; because it follows, from the Notion of a God, both that there must of necessity be some Divine Revelation, and that the Scriptures are that Divine Revelation. VI. Having done this, I shall, in the last place, endeavour to clear such Points as are commonly thought most liable to exception in the Christian Religion; and shall propose some Considerations, which may serve to remove such Objections, and obviate such Cavils as are usually rais'd against the Holy Scriptures.

C H A P.

of the Christian Religion.

C H A P. I.

That from the Notion of a God, it necessarily follows that there must be some Divine Revelation.

IN the First place, I shall shew how Reasonable and Necessary it is to suppose, that God should Reveal himself to Mankind: And I shall insist the rather upon this, because it is not usually so much consider'd in this Controversie as it ought to be; for if it were, it certainly would go very far towards the proving the Divine Authority of the Scriptures; since if it be once made appear that there must be some Divine Revelation, it will be no hard matter to prove that the Scriptures are that Revelation: For if it be proved that there must be some Revealed Religion, there is no other which can bear any competition with that contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. My first Business therefore shall be to shew, from the Consideration of the Attributes of God, and of the Nature and State of Mankind, that in all Reason we cannot but believe that there is some Revealed Religion in the World.

There is nothing more evident to Natural Reason, than that there must be some Begin-

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ning, some First Principle of Being, from whence all other Beings proceed. And nothing can be more absurd, than to imagine that that wonderful variety of Beings in the Heavens and Earth and Seas, which all the Wisdom of Man is not able in any measure to understand, or throughly to search into, should yet be produced and continued for so many thousand Years together, without any Wisdom or Contrivance; that an unaccountable concourse of Atoms, which could never build the least House or Cottage, should yet build and sustain the wonderful Fabrick of the whole World; that when the very Lines in a Globe or Sphere cannot be made without Art, the World it self, which that is but an imperfect Imitation of, should be made without it, and that less Skill should be required to the forming of a Man, than is necessary to the making of his Picture; that Chance should be the cause of all the Order, and Fortune of all the Constancy and Regularity in the Nature of Things; and that the very Faculties of Reason and Understanding in all Mankind, should have their Original from that, which had no Sense or Knowledge, but was meer Ignorance and Stupidity. This is so far from being Reason and Philosophy, that it is down-right Folly and Contradiction.

From a Being therefore of Infinite Perfection must proceed all things that are besides,

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sides, with all their Perfections and Excellencies, and among others, the Vertues and Excellencies of Wisdom, Justice, Mercy and Truth must be derived from him, as the Author of all the Perfections of which the Creatures are capable. And it is absurd to imagine that the Creator and Governor of the World, who is infinitely more Just, more Wise and Good and Holy than any Creature can be, will not at last reward the Good, and punish the Wicked. For, *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Is it to be supposed that the Wise and Good God would create Men only to abuse themselves and one another? to live a while in sin and folly here, and some of them in the most extravagant and brutal wickedness, and then go down to the Grave, and so there should be an end of them for ever? What is there worthy of the infinite Wisdom of God, in so poor a Design as this! Doth not the Voice of Nature it self teach us, and has it not been the general Belief and Expectation of all Ages and Nations, that the prosperous Sinner, who is subtle and powerful to do mischief, must suffer in another World, for what he has done amiss here? and, that all is not to pass away with us in Sport and Extravagance, in Laughter and Noise, in Riot, or in Violence and Cruelty, as some Men are willing to believe; as if the World were made for the Wicked, and they to abuse it.

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It appears likewise, from the common Belief and Experience of Mankind, that as there is a God of infinite Goodness and Holiness; so there are wicked and malicious Spirits, which are ever contriving the mischief and ruine of Men. For besides the Evidence of this from Scripture, which we must be allowed here to alledge in the nature at least of an History, it is folly to imagine that all the Oracles and Prodigies of the Heathens could be meer Forgeries, and that there was no ground nor foundation for such a Belief as universally obtained in all Nations and Ages of the World, and for the Customs and Practices, which followed upon this Belief, that there are *Dæmons*, or Spirits, of an evil and malicious Disposition and Power. I shall instance only in the unnatural Cruelties which the Heathen World, even the *Greeks* and *Romans* themselves, were continually put upon, by the instigation of these malicious and wicked Spirits. For the Heathen Nations offered up multitudes of innocent Men and Women, and even their own Children, in Sacrifice to their False Gods; which is as sure an Evidence that there are such Beings which required these Cruelties from them, as it is, that there are Tyrants and Persecutors, when they cause innocent Men to be murdered, and Children to be torn from the Arms of their Parents and slain in their sight. And though the Dominion of Satan be

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be now restrained by the over-ruling Power of the Gospel, we have as great Evidence from all History that there are such Beings as Devils, as we have for any other Matter of Fact whatsoever. There have been, indeed, many false Stories concerning Spirits, as well as in other Matters of History: but doth this prove that there are none true? or could the Historians of all Times and Places be perpetually imposed upon, or conspire to impose upon others? There is no ancient History but gives some Instance or other of these things; and all the modern Histories of Heathen Nations are full of such Relations as confirm this Truth to us; and even among Christians, those who have by unlawful Arts put themselves under the Power of wicked Spirits, have been convinced that there are such Beings; which is proved not only by the publick Confessions of Witches in all Nations, but by the private (a) Acknowledgments of divers learned Men, both Physicians and others who have made attempts to discover the truth of this matter, in different places, and were Persons neither timorous nor superstitious. But the Apparition of Spirits is Præter-natural; and therefore, that Good Spirits, who live in perfect Obedience to the Divine Will, and in Conformity to the Order of their Nature, should appear, is now no more to be expected than any other Miracle: but there are frequent Apparitions of

(a) See Mr. Boyle's Excellency of Theology, &c. S. 1.

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Bad Spirits in Countries where the Christian Religion is not received; and where it is received, they appear to such as are willing to come under their Power, but very rarely to others. And if the Devil, after so much Humane Blood as he has caused to be spilt in his Sacrifices, and after so many Oracles and Impostures, can yet persuade some Men that there is no such Being; this is one of his subtlest Stratagems of all, and proves how great Power, though in a different kind and manner, he still retains over the Minds of Men.

Since therefore it is most certain that there is a Being of Infinite Power and Wisdom and Justice and Goodness; and that there is likewise a malicious cruel Spirit, ever watchful and industrious to abuse and destroy Mankind: it is highly reasonable to believe, that a Being of such infinite Perfections, after he had created Man, would communicate himself to him, would set him a Rule by which he ought to live, and prescribe him Laws whereby he might answer the Ends of his Creation, and attain to that Happiness which he was made capable of, and designed for by his Maker. We cannot suppose that the God of all Goodness and Wisdom would create Man, and then leave him to himself, to follow his own Inventions, and to live at random, without any Law or Direction to frame his Actions by, and to be exposed to all the Assaults of an impla-

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implacable subtle Enemy, without any Caution and Instruction given him, or any help and assistance afforded for his defence. *Man*, in his Innocence, was not thus to be left to himself. And we have all the reason in the World to believe, though we had not the express Word of Scripture for it, that the God of Infinite Goodness would not disregard this corrupt State of Mankind, but would use some means to reclaim them from the *error of their ways*, to bring them to a knowledge of themselves, and of the Divine Majesty, to inform them of their Duty, and direct them to Happiness.

How Man became so prone to all evil, we can know only by Revelation; and therefore those who reject all Revelation, must suppose that Man was first created in this state of Sin and Misery; which is a very heinous Imputation upon the Goodness and Justice of God: but to suppose him placed in this condition, without all help or remedy, is to charge God still more foolishly. But how Men became so, is not here the matter of Enquiry; it is evident that Man is of himself in a miserable and helpless condition; and considering the great Ignorance and Wickedness which have been from the Fall of our First Parents visible continually in the World, and still reign in it; considering, I say, the notorious Wickedness and gross Ignorance of Men, which, from the earliest
Records

Records of Antiquity, have continued down to our own Times, nothing is more reasonable than to think that a Being of Infinite Perfection would take some care to rectifie the Mistakes, and reform the Manners of Men. Can we believe it consistent with Infinite Truth, never to manifest it self in the World, but to suffer all sorts of Men, of all Nations, to be exposed to all the Designs and Delusions of Impostors, and of seducing and apostate Spirits, without any sufficient means afforded them to undeceive and rescue themselves? Can we suppose that God of infinite Majesty and Power, and who is a *Jealous God*, and will not *give his honour to another*, should suffer the World to be guilty of Idolatry, to make themselves Gods of Wood and Stone? nay, to offer their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils, and to commit all manner of Wickedness in the Worship of their False Gods, and make Murder, and Adultery, and the worst of Vices, not only their Practice, but their Religion? Can we imagine that the True God would behold all this, for so many Ages, among so many People, and yet not concern himself to put a stop to so much Wickedness, and to vindicate his own Honour, and restore the Sense and Practice of Vertue upon Earth?

I shall, in due place, prove at large, That Mankind have in all Ages had the greatest necessity

necessity for a Revelation to direct and reform them; and, That the Philosophers themselves taught abominably wicked Doctrines, who yet were the best Teachers and Instructors of the Heathen World. And we have no true Notion of God, if we do not believe him to be a God of Infinite Power and Knowledge and Holiness and Mercy and Truth; and yet we may as well believe there is no God at all, as imagine that the God of Infinite Knowledge should take no notice of what is done here below; that Infinite Power should suffer it self to be affronted and despised, without requiring any Satisfaction; that Infinite Holiness should behold the whole World lie in Wickedness, and find out no way to remedy it; and that Superstition and Idolatry, and all the Tyranny of Sin and Satan, for so long a time, should enslave and torment the Bodies and Souls of Men, and there should be no Compassion in Infinite Mercy, nor any Care over an erroneous and deluded World, in the God of Truth.

Would a wise and good Father see his Children run on in all manner of Folly and Extravagancy, and take no care to reclaim them, nor give them any Advice, but leave them wholly to themselves, to pursue their own Ruine? And if this be unworthy to suppose of Natural Parents, how much more unreasonable is it to imagine this of God himself,

himself, whom we cannot but represent to our selves with all the Compassions of the tenderest Father or Mother, without the Weakness and Infirmities that accompany them in Humane Parents? How unreasonable is it to entertain such a Thought of Almighty God, Infinite in Goodness and Mercy, as to suspect that he would suffer Mankind to make themselves as miserable as they can, both in this World and the next, without putting any stop to so fatal a course of Sin and Misery, or interposing any thing for their Direction, to shew them the way to escape Destruction, and to obtain Happiness! The Fall of our First Parents is known to us only by Revelation, and therefore is not to be taken into consideration, when we argue upon the meer Principles of Reason. But I consider Mankind, as we find it in Fact (setting aside the Advantages of Revelation) Wicked, and abandoned to Wickedness, in the *snare of the devil, taken captive by him at his will, unable to work out their own salvation*; lost and undone, without Power or Strength, without any Help or Remedy. And in this state of the World, however it came to pass, is there no Reason to believe that Infinite Goodness should take some course, and not disregard all Mankind lying in this condition?

The great Argument of the Scoffers of the last Days, St. Peter tells us, would be
this,

this, That all things go on in their constant course, and that God doth not meddle or concern himself with them. *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation? 2 Pet. iii. 4.* And if no Promise had ever been made, they would have had some Reason in their Arguing. For that which rendred the Heathen without Excuse, was, That they did not make use of the Natural Knowledge that they had of God, to lead them to the Knowledge of his Revealed Will, which they had frequent Opportunities of becoming acquainted withal, and had many Memorials of it amongst them in every Nation: but, *they did not like to retain God in their mind.* And this is the force of Saint Paul's Argument, *Act. xvii. & Rom. i.* (unless this latter Chapter were to be understood, as Dr. Hammond interprets it, of the *Gnostick Hereticks*;) That the *Gentiles* ought not to pervert and stifle those Natural Notions which God had implanted in their Minds, but from the Law of Nature to proceed to find out the Written Law; and for this Reason, the Bounds of the Habitation of other Nations were determined and appointed by God, *according to the number of the children of Israel, that they might seek the Lord, and might be able to find and discover the True Religion and Way of Worship among that People to whom he had revealed himself,*

Deut.

Deut. xxxii. 8. Act. xvii. 26, 27. They might have been less vicious than they were, without the Knowledge of a Revelation ; and therein they were inexcusable, that though they could not free themselves from the power of Sin, yet they might not have given themselves so wholly up to it, as to become excluded from the Grace and Salvation to be obtained by the Revealed Will of God. And when God has revealed himself, all who will not use the Means, and by a due Improvement of their Reason endeavour from Natural Religion to arrive at Revealed, become inexcusable for their Negligence and Contempt of God, and the abuse of those Talents and Endowments which God has bestowed upon them. For when God has once given Men warning, and directed them in the way of Salvation, and they will not regard it ; they must be wilfully ignorant if they will not consider, that *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* ; and it is an argument of his Patience and Long-suffering, that he doth not bring speedy Vengeance upon a disobedient and rebellious World : *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness,) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.* Now this is very well consistent and exceedingly agreeable

able with all the Divine Perfections, that he should give Men warning of the Evil and Danger of Sin, and afterwards leave them to their own choice, whether they will be Righteous and Happy, or Wicked and Miserable ; and then that he should not take the first opportunity to punish them, nor lay hold of any Advantage against them, but give them time for second Thoughts, and space for Consideration and Repentance : but if they abuse so much Patience and Loving-kindness, that he should at last come upon them, when they least think of him, with a mighty and terrible Judgment, and with a sudden and unexpected Fury. But to stand by and look on unconcern'd, and then to take Men upon such a surprise, without giving them any notice of it before-hand, is a thing impossible to be accounted for, and can never be reconciled with the Divine Attributes. *St. Athanasius* (b) insists at large upon this Argument, and carries it so far as to prove the Necessity of the Incarnation of the Son of God from it : He urges, That it would have been unworthy of the Goodness of God to suffer all Mankind to be destroyed by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by their own Fault and Negligence ; and that it had been more consistent with his Wisdom and Goodness, never to have created Men, than to have suffered them thus to perish : “ An Earthly King (*says he*) when he has “ planted

(b) *S. Athan. de Incarnatione Verbi Dei.*

“planted a Colony, will not carelessly
 “suffer his Subjects to become Slaves to a
 “Stranger, or to revolt from him; but he
 “will, by his Proclamations, admonish them
 “of their Duty, and often-times will send
 “Messages to them by his Friends; and if
 “there be a necessity for it, will go to them
 “himself, to awe them by his Presence, and
 “recall them to their Obedience. And (*as*
 “*he there adds*) shall not God much rather be
 “so mindful of his Creatures, as to use some
 “Means to reclaim them from their evil
 “Ways, and regain them to his Service?
 “especially when they must be utterly un-
 “done for ever, unless he take care of
 “them.

It is plain then, that though we had never
 heard of such a thing as a Miracle, or a
 Prophecy, or of Revealed Religion; yet
 from the consideration of the State of the
 World, and the great Ignorance and Corrup-
 tion of Humane Nature, it would be reason-
 able to expect that God should some way
 make known his Will to Mankind; and we
 cannot reconcile it to his Attributes, nor
 conceive how it ~~should~~ be consistent with
 them, for him to be an unconcerned Spe-
 ctator of so much Folly and Wickedness,
 without taking any care to remedy it. God
 cannot be obliged to force Men to obey his
 Commandments, and comply with his Will,
 but rather to leave it at their own choice,
 whe-

whether they will be Happy or Miserable:
 but it was necessary to propose the Terms of
 Salvation to them, to offer them their free
 Choice, to set before them Life and Death,
 Blessings and Cursings, and so to leave the
 Obstinate without all Excuse.

And this is all which I am here concerned
 to prove, That it is Reasonable to suppose
 that God would Reveal himself to Mankind,
 and that it is not conceivable how it should
 be consistent with the Divine Attributes for
 him not to do it. To own the Being of a
 God, and yet to deny a Providence, is so
 great an absurdity, that none of the Philo-
 sophers, but *Epicurus*, were guilty of it;
 and this was look'd upon, in him, as amount-
 ing to the denial of the Divine Existence.
 And to grant both the Being and the Provi-
 dence of God, and yet to confine the Divine
 Care and Providence to the Bodies only, and
 Outward Condition of Men, and to imagine
 that the Spiritual and Immortal Part of Man
 is disregarded or neglected by him, is no less
 an absurdity than wholly to deny his Provi-
 dence or his Existence; because this is to
 deny the most considerable and inestimable
 Part of Providence, which concerns our
 Souls, and our Eternal State; and therefore
 it is, by consequence, to deny the Attributes
 of God, and to represent him not as he is in
 himself, but Unwise, Unmerciful, and Un-
 holy. To say that there is no such thing as

a Divine Revelation, is no better, in effect, than Atheism: For whoever can be of this opinion, must believe only the Being of such Gods as *Epicurus* owned, that never concerned themselves with Humane Affairs; which was only, in other words, to say that they were no Gods at all.

It has therefore been the constant Belief and Opinion of all Nations, that their Gods did in some way or other Reveal themselves to Men; and though so great a part of the World have worshipped False Gods, and have been mistaken as to the particular Revelations, which they received for Divine, yet it must proceed either from Ancient Tradition, or from the Reasonableness of the thing itself, or from both, that all the World should expect that the Divine Being should by some means communicate himself to Men, and declare his Will to them.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

The Way and Manner by which Divine Revelations may be supposed to be Delivered and Preserved in the World.

MAnkind had so corrupted themselves, that the Will and Laws of God could not be effectually made known to them, but by some extraordinary way of Revelation. God had manifested himself in the Creation of the World, and by the Preservation of all things from the Beginning, according to their several Natures: *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 God-head,* Rom. i. 20. But Men had corrupted themselves even in the plainest and most fundamental Points of all Religion, and acted against all the Dictates of Natural Reason, in worshipping the vilest Parts of the Creation, rather than God himself, and in contempt and defiance of Him, had set up even *four-footed beasts and creeping things* instead of Gods. How then could the Power and Authority of God be asserted, but by some extraordinary way of Revelation; since the ordinary and constant Methods of God's revealing

vealing and manifesting himself by his Providence, in the Preservation and Government of the World, had been so far perverted and abused, as that Men were seduced to the Worship of any thing, or of every thing, rather than of God? Mankind had neither the Will nor Ability to reform themselves, and had by their own fault brought themselves under an utter incapacity of being reformed but by some extraordinary Revelation. Natural Reason might have taught them to be less Wicked, but nothing could make them Righteous but a Revelation; and the gross Errors and Crimes which the wisest Men had fallen into, shews the necessity of an extraordinary Revelation from God, to instruct and inform the World. And the ways of extraordinary Revelation are but these two, either God's immediate Revelation of himself to particular Persons; or a power of working Miracles, and of Prophecy and Foretelling future Events, bestowed upon some, to convince others that they are Inspired, and come with a Commission from God, to instruct them in what he has revealed.

But it cannot seem requisite that God should immediately Inspire or make an immediate Revelation to every particular Person in the World: For either he must so powerfully influence their Minds and Affections, as to take away their choice and freedom

dom of Acting, which would be to offer violence to Humane Nature; or else Men would, for the most part, have gone on in their wicked courses still, and would have denied God in their Lives, though their Understandings were never so clearly and fully convinced of his Will and Commandments, as well as of his *Eternal Power and God-head*. For, as *St. Paul testifies*, the Heathen themselves were not ignorant of the being of God; but *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God*. No Man can be more certain of any Inspiration which he can receive, than he is of the Being of that God from whom he receives it; and therefore he who denies the Being of God, must by consequence deny the Truth of any such Inspiration, unless it have that powerful Impulse upon his Mind, as both to convince him and force him to an Acknowledgment at once of the Being of God, and of the Operation of his Spirit upon his Soul. And it is hard to conceive how any Inspiration which doth not over-rule the Will and Affections, as well as convince the Understanding, should be of more efficacy upon the Minds and Lives of such Men, than the Notion of a God is. For if Men can so stifle the Notion of a God in their Minds, as to doubt whether there be any God or no, or at least to Act as if there were none; no Reason can be given why they might not as well act against any Conviction which they

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might receive by Inspiration, or any other way of immediate Revelation, (unless it had an irresistible effect upon them,) and either take it all for Fancy and Delusion, or else so harden themselves against it, as not to be reclaimed by it: And of this we have *Balaam* for an Example, who, notwithstanding the Revelations he received from God, *loved the wages of unrighteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 15.

But, above all Men, the Profane and Obstinate Unbelievers can have least reason to expect that God should vouchsafe them an immediate Revelation. (c) The Jews have observed, that the Spirit of Prophecy rested only upon Men of regular and pure Affections, of gentle and meek and tractable Dispositions. *For the Lord will be found of them that tempt him not, and sheweth himself to such as do not distrust him: for froward thoughts separate from God: into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. For the holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in*, Wisd. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

(c) Vid. Smith, of Prophecy, c. 8.

(d) *Quis rerum divinarum Hæres sit.* Philo, p. 404.

(e) See Dr. Hammond, on Psal. cv. 19.

And to the same purpose (d) *Philo* speaks. And for this reason, when *Joseph* had the *Interpretation of Dreams* revealed to him, (e) *the Word of the Lord* is said to try him, or to purge, to clear and justify him; it being evident, that God would not in that manner Inspire one who had been guilty of the Crimes

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Crimes which *Joseph* was accused of. It is not to be imagin'd that God should further reveal himself to all such in particular, by an immediate Inspiration, who have rejected all the Manifestations which he has made of himself, in the Creation and Government of the World; but, that he would reserve these immediate Revelations, as peculiar Favours, to his faithful and obedient Servants. God has sometimes, indeed, made use of wicked Men, *Balaam, Caiaphas, &c.* as his Instruments both in Prophecies and Miracles, to shew that they are at his disposal, and proceed from his Bounty, not from any Worth or Merit of Men; and that he can over-rule the Designs and Intentions of the worst of Men, and make them serviceable to him, even against their Will, whenever he pleaseth: but then these are peculiar Cases, in which these Gifts were afforded for particular Ends, and for the Benefit of others, and the Men themselves were never the better for them. But as for the Disobedient, *St. Paul* acquaints us how, in the general Dispensations of his Providence, God dealt with them; *God gave them over to a reprobate mind*, Rom. i. 28. and he there sets down a Catalogue of those Sins which were the consequence of this Reprobation. The Apostle all along maintains, that they had so much Knowledge of God, as to render them without Excuse; and that they would make no Improvement of it, to

the attaining the Knowledge of the Laws of Nature first, and then of his Revealed Will; and it was the just Judgment of God to *give them up to their own hearts lusts*, to abandon them to the tyranny of their sins, since they would take no notice of his Works, and would not *abide his Counsels*: and it must needs have been highly inconsistent, to send immediate Revelations, or afford particular Inspiration to all such Men as are there described. *God's Spirit will not always strive with man*; but he withdraws his ordinary Grace from those that abuse it, and therefore it can never be presumed he should confer higher Favours upon them.

If Men will believe upon reasonable Motives, they have sufficient Means of Salvation allowed them; but if they will not believe without some immediate Revelation, they are never like to have that in this World, but in the next God will reveal himself with terror and vengeance upon all the *workers of iniquity*. God doth, both by Nature and by Revelation, provide for the Necessities, for the Welfare and Happiness, but never for the Humours and Peevishness of Men; and those who will not be saved, but according to some new Way and Method of their own Invention, must be miserable without remedy. I doubt not but the greatest Infidels would own, that if Christ should personally speak to them in a Voice from Heaven, or appear
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to them upon Earth, and grant them that Conviction which he once granted to *St. Thomas*, or *St. Paul*, they would believe in him, as these Apostles did. But they would do well to consider what reason there can be, why so much favour should be shewn to those who reject with scorn and derision all the Tenders of Grace, and Means of Salvation; and what Obligation God can be under, to save them in such a manner as themselves shall prescribe, who will not be saved in his Way; and according to the Terms of the Gospel. And if God should vouchsafe to make some immediate Revelation of himself to these insolent Offenders, and Blasphemers of his Name and Authority; how can we be assured that they would be converted? Would they not rather find out some pretence to persuade themselves that it was no real Revelation, but the effect of Natural Agents, or of Melancholy, and of a disturbed Imagination? For those who have so long not only rejected (that were a modest thing) but derided and reviled *Moses* and the Prophets, nay, the Apostles, and our Saviour himself, *would not believe, though one should rise from the dead*. They might be terrified, perhaps, for the present, but they would soon stifle those Apprehensions with their accustomed Arguments for Atheism and Infidelity. I hope to prove, in this Discourse, That all but Atheists must be convinced of the Truth of the Revelations
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lations delivered down to us in the Old and New Testament, if they will but take the pains to consider them : and Atheists could never be convinced of any Revelation whatsoever ; for Men must first believe that there is a God, before they can believe that he reveals himself either to themselves or others.

But besides their being ineffectual, and never to be expected by such as this Conceit must be calculated for ; this Supposition, of immediate Revelations to every Man in particular, would fill the World with continual Impostures and Delusions. For if every one had a Revelation made to himself, every one might pretend to others what he pleased ; and we know, from the Example of the Prophet who was sent to Prophesie against the Altar at *Bethel*, that a Man may be deluded by the pretence of a Revelation made to another, against an expresse Revelation made to himself ; and we may conclude that this would often happen, from what we every day experience : For if Men can be perverted by the Arts and Insinuations of others, against their own Reason and Judgment, they might as well be prevailed upon to act against a Revelation made to them, though Revelations were as common and familiar a thing amongst Men, as Reason it self is.

So that immediate Revelations to every particular Man would have been needless and super-

superfluous ; they would have been unfutable to the Majesty and Honour of God ; and they would have been ineffectual to the Ends for which they must be supposed to be designed, and would have given many more pretences to Impostures than there are now in the World.

But there were many Considerations, even in a wicked World, to move the Compassions of Infinite Mercy towards Mankind : Though all were under the dominion of sin, and unable of themselves to become righteous, yet some were more wicked than others ; great numbers of Men were carried away to commit heinous Impieties, through their own Ignorance, and the Example of others ; and though the Heathen were never without excuse, yet they were chiefly inexcusable, because God had always a Revealed Will, which he would by some means or other have brought them to the Knowledge of, if they had lived according to their Natural Knowledge of him, and of their Duty towards him ; and though the Heathen had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with the Revealed Will of God, yet much allowance was to be made for the times of Ignorance before the Gospel. God was pleased to reveal himself from time to time ; and at last by the Gospel, in a more wonderful and evident manner than ever he had done before, and to afford Men fuller means of Conviction,

viction, and greater measures of Grace to comply with it, and *work out their own salvation*. And God has made these Revelations of his Will, by enduing certain Men with a Power of Prophefying, and working Miracles, who were to declare his Will to others, and to certifie the rest of the World that it was indeed his Will and Commandments which they delivered.

And this was the most proper Method, and most worthy of God. For, as I have proved, God would not create Mankind, and then take no further care of them; since, in the state of Innocence, they better deserved his Care, and have ever after stood in so much need of it, and could at no time be happy, either in this World or the next, without it: And it cannot with any reason be objected, by those who have never so great a mind to cavil at the Terms and Means of Salvation by the Gospel, That God should apply himself to every Person by a particular Revelation: both because so much Condescension and Indulgence would be ill bestowed upon those who have so little deserved it; and because it would have no better effect than Prophecies and Miracles have had towards the Conversion of Men; but a very ill one, in affording Pretences to all sorts of Impostures: And where two several Means are alike futable to any End, no Man, surely, will presume to prescribe to Almighty God,

God, and say, that he ought to have used one rather than the other; much less when one is inconvenient, and the other the only proper Means to be used.

II. I proceed therefore to shew, That Prophecies and Miracles are the most fitting and proper Means for God to discover and reveal himself to the World by. It is evident, that they are not accompanied with those Inconveniencies with which immediate Revelations would have been; there is no Prophecy, nor Miracle, but it has the design'd effect upon many Persons; the Majesty and Honour of God is not exposed to the scorn of every profane and obstinate Offender; and there is as effectual care taken to prevent Impostures, as possibly could have been. And as Prophecies and Miracles have none of the Inconveniencies which immediate Revelations would have had; so I shall shew, that they have all the Advantage and Usefulness which it can be supposed that immediate Revelations would have had, if they had been granted to every Person in particular. All that any immediate Revelation could do, is to afford Men the Means of Conviction, and Assurance that the Revelation proceeds from God, as certainly as that God himself is: And this Prophecies and Miracles do.

I. Concerning *Prophecies*, it is observable, That the Oracles and Lying Divinations

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with which the Devil has imposed upon the World, shew, That it is natural for Men to expect that God should reveal himself by Prophecies: Which made them so prone to receive false Prophecies from their false Gods. And this may teach us, that true Prophecies are to be expected from the True God. Many Prophecies are of that nature, that none but God Omniscient could be the Author of them; and these, in their Accomplishment, must carry an indisputable Evidence of Divine Revelation along with them. Such are the Predictions of Things to be fulfilled many Ages afterwards, which, in the fulfilling, depend upon the Counsels and Determinations of free Agents; and Predictions of the Sins of Men, which they could not be determined to, but by their own choice. It is above the Capacity of Humane Understanding, to conceive how it is possible that Things should be foreseen so long before either the Actions or the Agents themselves have any existence, or how Contingencies can be the Object of Infallible Prescience: And therefore for God to foretell Things of this nature by his Prophets, is a most proper and certain way of Revelation; because it is above the Power of any Finite Being to do the like. It is the Prerogative of him that *formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, to declare unto man what is his thought: The Lord, the God of Hosts is his name, Amos iv. 13.*

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For which reason the False Gods are challenged to foretell these Things; *Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods, Isai. xlii. 23.*

But because Things foretold may sometimes come to pass by chance, or it may be in the Power of Evil Spirits to foretell them when they are in Design and Agitation, and just ready for Action; or to discern things done at distant places, and to make probable Guesses, which may prove true, from the various Circumstances of Affairs which they observe in the World: we may therefore be assured, from the consideration of the Divine Attributes of Goodness and Truth, that God will not suffer false Religions to be imposed upon the World, under his own Name, by Diabolical Predictions, without affording Means to discover them to be such. *When a Prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him, Deut. xviii. 22.* This is the Mark of Distinction between a False and a True Prophet, That whatever the latter foretold in the Name of the Lord, should come to pass; but whatever the first foretold in his Name, should not come to pass: which implies, that God will disappoint such Predictions, and not suffer them to come to pass; otherwise the coming

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to pass of Things foretold, could be no certain Mark of a true Prophet, because they might come to pass by chance. *The Prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the Prophet shall come to pass, then shall the Prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him, Jer. xxviii. 9.* But if the Prophecy were not pretended to be in the Name of the True God, but were given out with a profess'd Design to entice Men to the Worship of False Gods; then God might suffer it to be fulfilled, to prove his People, *Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.* For this was consistent with God's Truth and Goodness, especially after Warning given, and after so clear a Revelation both by Prophecies and Miracles: if any Man, in this case, would be seduced by any Wonder, or Prophecy, to follow other Gods, it must be great Perverseness in him. But when Prophecies are delivered by many Prophets, in divers Ages, and different Places, all teaching the same Doctrine, and tending to the same End and Design in their several Revelations, and that End is the discouragement of all Wickedness, and the maintenance of all Vertue and true Religion, these Prophecies have all that can be requisite to assure us that they are from God; and God, by suffering them to pass so long in the World, under his own Name, and with all the Characters of his Authority upon them, has given us all possible Assurance that they are his, and engaged

gaged us, in Honour to his Divine Attributes, to believe that they really are by his Authority.

And the Certainty of Prophecies being thus grounded upon the Divine Attributes, besides the direct Evidence which they afford to whatever is delivered by them, they add an undeniable Confirmation to those Miracles which have been foretold, and are wrought at the Time, and in the Manner, and by the Persons foretold by the Prophets; and the Prophecies likewise receive as great a Confirmation from such Miracles. For *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, which are singly a sufficient Evidence of Divine Revelation, do mutually support and confirm each other; and hereby we have all the Assurance that can be expected of any Divine Revelation: And therefore, as *Prophecy* is in it self a most fitting and proper way of Revelation; so, in conjunction with *Miracles*, it is the most certain way that can be desired.

2. The futableness and efficacy of *Miracles*, to prove a Divine Revelation. It is an extravagant thing to conceive, that God should exclude himself from the Works of his own Creation; or, that he should establish them upon such inviolable Laws, as not to alter them upon some occasions, when he foresaw it would be requisite to do it: For unless the course of Nature had been thus alterable it would have been defective in regard to

one great End for which it was design'd ; viz. it would have failed of being serviceable to the Designs of Providence upon such Occasions. The same Infinite Wisdom which contrived the Laws for the Order and Course of Nature, contrived them so, as to make them alterable, when it would be necessary for God, by suspending the Powers, or interrupting the Course of Nature, to manifest his extraordinary Will and Power ; and by the same Decree by which he at first established them, he subjected them to such Alterations as his Wisdom foresaw would be necessary.

We can as little doubt, but that He who made the World, has the sole Power and Authority over it ; and that nothing can be done in it, but by his Direction and Influence, or at least by his Permission ; and that the Frame and Order of Nature which he at first appointed, can at no time be altered, but for great Ends and Purposes. He is not given to change, as Men are, and can never be disappointed in his Eternal Purposes and Designs. But when any thing comes to pass above the Course of Nature, and contrary to it, in confirmation of a Revelation, which, for the Importance and Excellency of the Subject of it, and in all other respects, is most worthy of God, we may be sure that this is his doing ; and there is still further Evidence of it, if this Revelation were prophesied of before, by Prophets who fore-
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told that it should be confirmed by Miracle. As, when Men born blind, received their Sight ; when others were cured of the most desperate Diseases, by a Touch, or at a Distance ; when the Dead were raised, and the Devils cast-out ; these were evident Signs of a Divine Power and Presence, which gave Testimony to the Doctrine delivered by those by whom such Miracles were wrought, and the Divine Commission and Authority was produced for what they did and taught. For what could be more satisfactory and convincing to Men, or more worthy of God, than to force the Devils themselves to confess and proclaim his Coming ? to cause the most insensible things in nature to declare his Power, by giving way, as it were, and starting back in great confusion and disorder, at his more immediate and peculiar Presence, to inform Men that the God of Nature was there ? This gave Testimony to the Things revealed, and challenged the Belief of all Men, in a Language more powerful than any Humane Voice, whilst God shewed forth his Glory, and made known his Will, by exercising his Sovereignty over Nature, in making the whole Creation bow, and tremble, and obey. All which was performed according to express Prophecies concerning Christ, that there might be a visible concurrence both of Prophecies and Miracles in Testimony of him. And this Dispensation of Mi-
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acles was admirably fitted to propagate that Religion which concerned the Poor, as well as the Rich, the Unlearned as well as the Learned. Miracles were suitable to the Simplicity of the Gospel, and to the universal Design of it: For they are equally adapted to awaken the Attention, and command the Assent of Men of all Conditions and Capacities; they are obvious to the most Ignorant, and may satisfy the Wisest, and confute or silence the Cavils of the most Capricious and Contentious.

And this is what all the World ever expected, That God should Reveal himself to Men, by working somewhat above the Course of Nature. All Mankind have believed that this is the way of Intercourse between Heaven and Earth; and therefore there never was any of the false Religions, but it was pretended to have been confirmed by something miraculous. We may appeal to the Sense of all Nations for the Authority of Miracles to attest the Truth of Religion: for whenever any thing happened extraordinary, they always imagined something Supernatural in it; they expected that Miracles should be wrought for the Proof of any thing that had but the Name of Religion; and no false Religion could have gained Belief and Credit in any Age or Nation, but under the pretence of them.

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The only Difficulty therefore will be, to know how to distinguish True Miracles from False; or those which have been wrought for the Confirmation of the True Religion, from such as have been done, or are pretended to have been done, in Behalf of False Religions.

But here it must be observed, That it is not necessary, in this Controversie, that we should be able to determine what the Power of Spirits is, or how far it extends, and what Works can proceed only from the immediate Power of God: It is sufficient that we know, that God presides over All; that Good Spirits act in constant Subjection and Obedience to him; that Evil Spirits act for evil Ends; that Good Spirits will not impose upon Men, and that he will not suffer the Evil to do it, under any pretence of his own Authority, without affording Means to discover the Delusion. And the Question here is not concerning any strange Work whereof God is not alledged to be the Author, but concerning such as are wrought with a profess'd Design to establish Religion in his Name. Suppose then that there have been many Wonders wrought in the World, which exceed all Humane Power, and which yet we know not to what other Power to ascribe: this makes no Difficulty in the present case; because here, not only the Works themselves, but the Design and Tendency of them is to

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be considered. For Instance, Whether the Miracles reported to have been done by *Vespasian*, were true or false, by a Divine or a Diabolical Power, they are of no consequence to us; he established no new Doctrine, and pretended to no Divine Authority, but doubted the possibility of his working them: And supposing them true, and by a Divine Power, the most that can be said of them, is, that as God mention'd *Cyrus* by Name to be the Deliverer of the Jews, so he might by Miracle signalize this Prince who was to destroy them. But the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles were wrought with this declared Purpose and Design, That they were to give Evidence to the Religion which they were sent from God to introduce, as necessary to the Salvation of Mankind.

Having premised this, I must resume what was before observed concerning the Means by which false Prophecies might be detected. It has been already proved, from the *Notion of a God*, that there must be some *Divine Revelation*; and it has been shewn, That *Prophecies and Miracles* are the most fit and proper way of *Revelation*, and that way which Men have ever expected to receive *Revelations* by. If then there have been False Prophecies and Miracles, they must be supposed to have been either before or after those Prophecies and Miracles by which the True Religion was delivered; if before, then

then the same Divine Wisdom and Goodness which obliges God to reveal his Will to Mankind, must oblige him to take care that the Impostures of those False Prophecies and Miracles by some means might have been discovered. But there is great reason to believe that true Revelations should be first made to Men, before God would suffer them to be tempted with false ones; and if the false were after the true Revelations, then the true Revelations themselves are that by which we ought to judge of all others.

But to speak more particularly of *Miracles*, which are the present Subject. It is inconsistent with the Infinite Truth and Honour and Goodness and Mercy of God, to suffer Man to be deluded by false Miracles, wrought under a pretence of his own Authority, without any possibility of discovering the Imposture: And therefore if we should suppose there had past any time before the discovery of his Will to Mankind, he could not suffer Men, but through their own fault, to be imposed upon by such Miracles; but either by the false and wicked Doctrines which they were brought to promote and establish, as Idolatry, Uncleanness, Murders, &c. or by some other token of Imposture, they might have been undeceived; and both in the Old and New Testament God has given us warning against false Miracles, *Deut. xiii. 1. Mat. xxiv. 24. Gal. i. 8.* so that we may be assured that we

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are to give no credit to any Miracle that can be wrought to confirm any other Doctrine than what we find in the Scriptures ; and if we can but be certify'd that they were true Miracles which gave Testimony and Evidence to them, we need concern our selves about no other.

And the Miracles by which the Scriptures are confirmed and authorized must be true ; because there is no precedent Divine Revelation which they contradict, nor any immoral or false Doctrine which they deliver, nor any thing else contained in them whereby they can be proved to be false : And in this case, that which all the Wit and Understanding of Man cannot prove to be false, must be true, or else God would suffer his own Name and Authority to be usurped and abused, and Mankind to be imposed upon in a thing of infinite consequence, without any possibility of discovering the Imposture, which it is contrary to the Divine Attributes for him to permit ; but either by the Works themselves, or by the End and Design of them, or by some means or other, the Honour and Wisdom and Mercy of God is concerned to detect all such Impostures. If Miracles be wrought to introduce the Worship of other Gods, besides him, whom Reason, as well as Scripture, assures us to be the only True God ; if they be done to seduce Men to immoral Doctrines and Practices ; if they

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be performed to contradict the Religion already confirmed by Miracles, in which nothing of this nature could possibly be discovered ; if never so astonishing Miracles be wrought for such ill Designs as these, they are not to be regarded, but rejected with that Constancy which becomes a Man who will act according to the Principles of Natural Reason and Religion. But when Miracles were performed, which, both for the End and Design of them, as well as for the manner and circumstances of their Performance, had all the credibility that any Miracle could have, if it were really wrought by God's immediate Power to confirm a Revelation ; if these Miracles have been foretold by Prophecies, (as, on the other side, the Prophecies were fulfilled by the Miracles,) if they were done publickly before all sorts of Men, and that often, and by many Men successively, for divers Ages together, and all agreed in the same Doctrine and Design ; if neither the Miracles themselves, nor the Doctrines which are attested by them, can be discovered to have any deceit or defect in them, but be most excellent and divine, and most worthy of God ; in such a case we have all the Evidence for the Truth of the Miracles, and of the Religion which they were wrought to establish, that we can have for the Being of God himself. For if these Miracles and this Religion

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be not from God, we must suppose either that God cannot, or that he will not so reveal himself by Miracle to the World, as to distinguish his own Revelation from Impostures: both which Suppositions are contrary to the Divine Attributes; contrary to God's Omnipotence, because he can do all things, and therefore can exceed the Power of all Finite Beings; and contrary to his Honour and Wisdom and Goodness, because these require both that he should reveal himself to the World, and that he should do it by Miracles, in such a manner as to make it evident which is his Revelation. But if he both can and will put such a Distinction between False Miracles and True, as that Men shall not, except it be by their own fault, be seduced by false Miracles, then that Religion which is confirmed by Miracles, concerning which nothing can be discovered to be either impious or false, must be the true Religion. For we have seen, that there must be some Revealed Religion, and that this Religion must be revealed by Miracle; and we have the Goodness and Truth and Justice of God engaged, that we should not be imposed upon by false Miracles, without being able to discern the Imposture: And therefore that Religion which both by its Miracles and Doctrine and Worship appears to be Divine, and could not be proved to be false, if it were so, must certainly be true; because the Goodness

ness and Honour of God is concerned, that Mankind, in a Matter of this consequence, should not be deceived, without their own fault or neglect, by Impostures vented under his own Name and Authority. Upon which account, the Sin against the Holy Ghost, in ascribing the Miracles wrought by *Christ*, to *Belzebub*, was so heinous above all other Crimes, this being to reject the utmost Means that can be used for Man's Salvation, and in effect to deny the Attributes and very Being of God. The sum of this Argument is, That though Miracles are a most fit and proper Means to prove the Truth of Religion; yet they are not only to be considered alone, but in conjunction with other Proofs; and that they must necessarily be true Miracles, or Miracles wrought to establish the true Religion, when the Religion upon the account whereof they are wrought cannot be discovered to be false, either by any defect in the Miracles, or by any other Means, but has all the Marks and Characters of Truth. Because God would not suffer the Evidence of Miracles, and all other Proofs, to concur to the confirmation of a false Religion, beyond all possibility of discovering it to be so.

3. How *Divine Revelations* may be supposed to be preserved in the World. It is reasonable to suppose that Divine Revelations should be committed to Writing, that they might

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might be preserved for the benefit of Mankind, and delivered down to Posterity, and that a more than ordinary Providence should be concerned in their preservation. For whatever has been said by some, of the Advantage of Oral Tradition, for the conveyance of Doctrines, beyond that of Writing, is so notoriously fanciful and strained, that it deserves no serious Answer. For till Men shall think it safest to make Wills, and bequeath and purchase Estates by Word of Mouth, rather than by Instruments in Writing, it is in vain to deny that this is the best and securest way of conveyance that can be taken: so the common Sense of Mankind declares, and so the Experience of the World finds it to be in things which Men take all possible care about; and it is too manifest, and much to be lamented, that Men are more solicitous about things Temporal, than about Eternal; which affords too evident a confutation of all the pretences of the Infallibility of Oral Tradition, upon this ground, That the Subject Matter of it are things upon which the Eternal Happiness or Misery of Mankind depends. *Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever, Isa. xxx. 8.*

4. It is requisite that a *Divine Revelation* should be of great Antiquity: Because, upon the same grounds that we cannot think that God would not at all Reveal himself to Mankind,

kind, we cannot suppose that he would suffer the World to continue long under a state of Corruption and Ignorance, without taking some care to remedy it, by putting Men into a capacity of knowing and practising the Duties of Vertue and Religion.

5. Another Requisite of a *Divine Revelation*, is, that it should be fully promulged and published to the World, for the general Good and Benefit of Mankind, that it may attain the Ends for which a Revelation must be designed.

T H E

THE
Reasonableness and Certainty
OF THE
Christian Religion.

PART II.

FROM what has been already Discoursed, it appears, that these things are requisite in a Divine Revelation: I. *Antiquity*. II. *Promulgation*. III. A sufficient Evidence, by *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, in Proof of its Authority. IV. The Doctrines delivered by Divine Revelation must be *Righteous* and *Holy*, consistent with the Divine Attributes, and suitable to their Condition to whom it is made, and every way such as may answer the Design of a Revelation.

CHAP.

C H A P. I.

The Antiquity of the Scriptures.

AS it is evident from the Divine Attributes, that God would not so wholly neglect Mankind, as to take no care to discover and reveal his Will and Commandments to the World; so, when there was so great a necessity of Divine Revelation, in order to the Happiness of Mankind, both in this World and the next, it is not to be believed that he would deferr it so long, before he made known his Will, as till the date of the first Antiquities amongst the Heathen. It cannot be denied, that some Books of the Scripture are much the ancientest Books of Religion in the World; for it were in vain to pretend that the Works in this kind (or indeed in any other.) of any Heathen Author can be compared with the *Pentateuch*, for Antiquity. And the Antiquity of these Books is one considerable circumstance, whereby we may be convinced that they are of Divine Revelation. For if God would not suffer the World to continue long in a state of Ignorance and Wickedness without a Revelation, we may conclude, that he would not suffer the Memory of it to be lost; and therefore a Book of this nature, which is so much
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the ancientest in the World, being constantly received as a Divine Revelation, carries great Evidence with it that it is Authentick. For the first Revelation, as hath been proved, is to be the *Criterion* of all that follow; and God would not suffer the ancientest Book of Religion in the World to pass all along under the Notion and Title of a *Revelation*, without causing some Discovery to be made of the Imposture, if there were any in it; much less would he preserve it by a particular and signal Providence, for so many Ages. It is a great Argument for the Truth of the Scriptures, that they have stood the Test, and received the Approbation of so many Ages, and still retain their Authority, though so many ill Men, in all Ages, have made it their endeavour to disprove them: but it is still a further Evidence in behalf of them, that God has been pleased to shew so remarkable a Providence in their preservation.

The Account we have of Divine Revelation, in the Writings of *Moses*, is from the Creation of the World; for he relates the Intercourse which from the Beginning past between God and Man, and this might be delivered down either by Writing or by Tradition, till *Moses's* time. For *Methuselah* living with *Adam*, and *Shem* with *Methuselah*, *Isaac* with *Shem*, and *Amram* the Father of *Moses* living with the Patriarchs, the Sons of *Jacob*,
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the History of the Creation, and of the Manifestations which God had been pleas'd to make of himself to their Fore-fathers, could not be unknown to that Age : such a Posterity could not but be zealous to preserve the Memory of so great Honours and Blessings ; and their living in *Goshen*, separate from the *Ægyptians*, did much contribute to the preservation of their Antiquities ; for there they lived in expectation of a Deliverance, and of seeing the Prophecies fulfilled that were made to their Fore-fathers concerning it. The famous Prediction made to *Abraham*, *Gen. xv. 13.* could not be forgotten in so few Generations : for the coming out of *Ægypt*, was, as it was there foretold it should be, in the Fourth Generation, reckoning from *Isaac*, the first of the promised Seed, to *Moses*, exclusively, *Exod. vi. 16.*

Moses seems to refer to some things that happened near the Beginning of the World, as well known in his own time, as *Gen. iv. 22.* where he says, *the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah* : For no probable account can be given, why *Naamah* should be mention'd, but because her Name was then well known among the *Israelites*, for some reason which it doth not concern us to be acquainted with, but which served to confirm to them the rest of the Relation. Some have delivered, that *Naamah*, by her Beauty, enticed the *Sons of God*, or the Posterity of *Seth*, to commit Idolatry,

Idolatry, *Gen. vi. 2.* And so *Gen. xi. 29.* we read, that *Haran* was the Father of *Ischah*, as well as of *Milcab* ; and *Gen. xxxvi. 24.* *this was that Anah that found the Mules* (or the Hot-Baths, or that fell upon the *Emims*, or Giants, mention'd *Deut. ii. 10, 11.* however the word be understood) *in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father* : These, and such like Particulars, must have been preserved, and commonly known among the *Israelites*, and were therefore inserted to serve as *Epocha's*, and notes of Remembrance, for the better understanding the rest of the History. The Story and manner of Life of *Nimrod* was conveyed in a Proverb ; *Wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord, Gen. x. 9.* And the Remembrance of *Abraham's* offering up his Son, was retained both by the Name of the Place, and by a Proverbial Saying ; *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh : as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, Gen. xxii. 14.* And there is no doubt to be made, but that there were other the like Remembrances of the most remarkable Transactions.

Josephus has proved, that Authors of all Nations agree, that in ancient Times Men lived to the Age of about a Thousand Years ; and some are known to have lived to a very great Age in latter Times. But however, it had been more serviceable to *Moses's* purpose, if

he had had any other design but Truth, that Men should not have been so long lived. For when he had so much scope for his Invention (if it had been an Invention of his own) he would never have fix'd the Creation of the World at the distance of so few Generations from the time in which he wrote, but would rather have made the Generations of Men more, and their Lives shorter, that so he might the better have concealed his Fictions in obscure and uncertain Relations, which must be supposed to be delivered through so many hands down to that Age. The distance of Time from the Flood to *Moses* was more than it is from the Conquest to the present Age, but half of this time *Noah* himself was living: and therefore allowing for the greater length of Mens Lives in thole Ages than in ours, the time when *Moses* wrote cannot be computed at so great a distance from the Flood, as we are at from the Reformation. But is it possible to make any Man of tolerable Sense, amongst us, believe that *Henry VIII.* was the first King of *England*? that he lived above Seven hundred Years ago? that there was a Deluge since his time which swept all the Inhabitants away of this Island, and of the whole World besides, but some seven or eight Persons, and that all whom we now see were born of them? And yet this, as ridiculous as it seems, is not more absurd than *Moses's* Account of the Creation and the Flood

Flood must have been to those of his own Time, if it were false.

For it is very reasonable to think, as *Josephus* informs us, that Writing was in use before the Flood: And it is not improbable, as some have conjectured, that the History of the Creation, and the rest of the Book of *Genesis*, was, for the substance of it, delivered down to *Moses's* time in Verse, which was the most easie to be remembred, and the most ancient of all sorts of Writing, and was at first chiefly used for Matters of History, and consisted of plain Narration, without much of Art or Ornament. We read of Instrumental Musick, *Gen. iv. 21.* before the Flood; and Vocal Musick being so much more natural than Instrumental, it is likely that Poetry was of as great Antiquity, both in their Hymns and Praises of God, and as a help to their Memories, which are the two Ends to which *Moses* applies his own Songs, or Poems, *Exod. xv. Deut. xxxii.* If it be thought that there was no Writing before the Flood, because there is no Account of the Invention of it, tho' the Inventors of other inferior Arts be mention'd; this rather proves the contrary, and that it was coæval with Mankind, or was the Invention of *Adam*. It is not probable, that in so long a Life, he should find out nothing for the use of himself and his Posterity, though no Invention be attributed to him; and Writing is so necessary,

that the World could very ill subsist without it for above Fifteen hundred Years. The *Græcians*, and other Nations, have recorded the first Inventors, as they supposed, of Letters, as those who best deserved a Memorial in History; and since there is no other mention amongst the ancientest *Jewish* Writers, but that they were before the Flood, some of them also ascribing them to *Adam*, this implies that they were of the greatest Antiquity, and the Time of their Invention is no more known than that of Ploughing and Sowing, and other necessary Arts, which were from the Beginning of the World.

But though it should be supposed, that before the Flood, they had not the same Conveniencies for preserving the Remembrance of things past, that we have had since, yet things of this nature could never be imposed upon the generality of Men; and if they had less Means of conveying things past to Posterity, they had fewer things to convey; and all their Histories being concerning the Ancestors of their own Families, they were easily remembered; and however short and imperfect, they could not be so defective, as that Men should generally be so grossly ignorant as to swallow such Impostures: They had One Day in Seven purposely set apart for the Praise and Worship of God, and the Commemoration of his Mercies vouchsafed to Mankind; and they, who had Pro-
verbial

verbial Remembrances of *Nimrod*, the third from *Noah*, could not be ignorant of *Noah* himself, and of the Flood in his time.

In so few Generations of Men as had past, by reason of the long Lives of the Patriarchs, it was impossible for *Moses* to impose upon those of his own Age in things so memorable as the Creation of the World, and the Flood, and the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, &c. But when, so long after the Flood, the Sons of *Noah* were dispersed into so far distant places of the Earth, and their Manners and Customs were different, and their Lives shorter, it became necessary that a true and lasting Account of those things should stand recorded in a Book of infallible Credit and Authority, for the benefit of future Ages, lest, in process of time, the Remembrance of them should become obscure and confused, and fabulous Stories should be imposed upon the World for Truth, in Matters of so great importance. For it has been observed by divers learned Men, that the most ancient Histories, as well as the Philosophy and Theology of the Heathens, contain many things concerning the Creation of the World, the first Propagation of Mankind, the Flood, and other particulars; which have so plain an agreement with what we read in the Book of *Genesis*, that they are supposed to be taken out of it: but they are obscured and disguised under other Names and Characters,

to conceal from whence they were originally taken, and to gain them the better acceptance amongst those for whose use the Books containing them were designed by their Authors. And when the Remembrance of God's Dealings with past Ages began to fail, and the ways of Humane Conveyance were so uncertain, it was requisite that some infallible Account should be given of Gods Dispensations, and his Communications of himself in the first Ages, which might be transmitted down to Posterity, unto the End of the World.

C H A P. II.

The Promulgation of the Scriptures.

THE End and Design of a Revelation from Heaven, must be for the Good of Mankind, and therefore it was necessary that it should be known and promulged in the World; and that Revelation which has been known to most Nations, and farthest divulged, carries another Evidence of its Divine Authority. For since it is necessary there should be some Divine Revelation, it is likewise necessary that it should be sufficient to the Ends for which it was designed; and it was

was revealed, not to be concealed, or confined to a few Persons, but to rectifie the Mistakes, and regulate the Manners of Men; and therefore that which has been most known, and farthest propagated, we have reason to think to be a true Revelation. If every thing else concurr to prove it true, the very Promulgation of it is a considerable Evidence in proof of its Divine Authority: Because it is not to be supposed that God would either suffer his own Revelation to be so stifled and suppress'd, as to become of little or no use and benefit to the World, or that he would permit false Revelations to be more known and divulged; either of which would very ill consist with the Intention of Revealing his Will to Mankind.

It has been already proved, That it is not to be expected that God should Reveal himself to every Man in particular; and it could not be requisite that he should afford a constant and standing Revelation in all Nations of the World. For if Mankind be sufficiently provided for in the Necessaries of Salvation, this is all which in Reason can be expected from a Just and Good God to sinful and perverse Man. If Men be put in the Ready Way of Salvation, and have sufficient Means allowed them to attain it; all beyond this is the meer arbitrary effect of Infinite Goodness, and depends wholly upon the good Pleasure of God, being more than we could promise

promise our selves from his Justice, or, by Reason, foresee from his Mercy it self. And his Wisdom so orders and disposes the Effects and Emanations of his Mercy, as to render them consistent with his Justice and Honour, as He is Governor of the World.

And if, in the first Ages, Revelations were frequent, and generally known amongst all Mankind, till by their own fault and neglect they were with-holden from them; it was the great Mercy of God, afterwards, to continue to those Nations, who had despised and rejected him, an opportunity of knowing his Will revealed to others: And this God was pleased to do, by appointing a chosen Seed, and selecting to himself a peculiar People to bear his Name before the Nations; and, by the various Dispensations of his Providence, he so disposed of that People, that all Nations might be instructed in the things revealed and delivered to them.

First then, I shall shew, That in the first Ages of the World, the Revealed Will of God was known to all Mankind.

Secondly, That in succeeding Ages there has still been sufficient Means and frequent Opportunities for all Nations to come to the Knowledge of it.

1. In the first Ages of the World, the Revealed Will of God was known to all Mankind. And here we must have recourse to the

the History of the Bible; since it is acknowledged by all learned Men to be so much the ancientest Book, which can give us an Account of Religion, in the World. For unless we will reject all History, and believe nothing related of Ancient Times, we must take our Accounts from such Books as treat of them: And till, by the Method proposed, I have proved the Bible to be of Divine Authority, I shall alledge it only as an Historical Relation of Things past; in which respect, it would be unreasonable to deny it that credit which is allowed to other Books of that nature. And this is all that is now desired, in order to the clearing of what I am at present upon; which is to shew, That nothing requisite to a true Revelation is wanting to the Scriptures; and therefore, that they have been sufficiently promulged and made known to the World.

In the Beginning of the World, God was pleased to create but one Man, and one Woman, and to people the Earth from them; which must exceedingly tend both to the preservation of Order and Obedience amongst Men, and to the retaining of the Knowledge of God, and of his Ways and Dealings with the first Parents of Mankind. But if Multitudes had been created, and the Earth had been peopled at once, the natural effect of this had been Ambition and Strife, Confusion and Ignorance: For as the Inhabitants of the

World

World multiplied, so did all Sin and Wickedness encrease; though all descended from the same Parents, and these Parents lived to see many Generations of their Off-spring, and to instruct and admonish them; which, if any thing could have done it, must have kept up a sense of God and Religion amongst Men. *Adam* himself performed the Office of a Father, a Priest, and a King, to his Children; and the Office and Authority of these three descended upon the Heads of Families, in the several Generations and Successions of Kingdoms amongst his Posterity: For that the same Person was both King and Priest in the earlier Ages of the World, we learn from the best Antiquities of other Nations; and it was so likewise amongst the *Jews*, till God had appointed an Order and Succession of the Priesthood in one Tribe: and therefore *Esau* is stiled a *profane Person*, for selling his Birth-right; because the Priesthood went along with it, *Heb. xii. 16.*

— *Omnēsque primogenitos Noe, donec sa-*

cerdotio fungeretur Aaron fuisse Pontifices (Hebræi tradunt.) Hieronym. Quæstion. seu Tradit. Hebraic. in Genes.

By all the Accounts we have of the World before the Flood, we are assured, that God was pleased, at first, to afford frequent Communications of himself to Mankind; and even to the Wicked, as to *Cain*, whose Punishment it afterwards was to be *hid from the face of the Lord*, and driven out from *his presence,*

sence, Gen. iv. 14, 16. And when the Wickedness of Men had provoked God to drown the World, he revealed this to *Noah*, and respited the execution of this Judgment an Hundred Years; and *Noah*, in the mean time, both by his Preaching, and by preparing an Ark, warned them of it, and exhorted them to Repentance: by *preparing of an ark to the saving of his house, he condemned the world, Heb. xi. 7.* and he was a *preacher of righteousness to the old world, 2 Pet. ii. 5.* He made it his business, for above an Hundred Years together, to forewarn the wicked World of their approaching Ruine; which he did by all the Ways and Means that a Wise and Great Man could contrive, proper for that End.

Noah lived, after the Flood, Three hundred and fifty Years, *Gen. ix. 28.* and it was between One and Two hundred Years before the Division of Tongues, and the Dispersion of the Sons of *Noah*. And when all the Inhabitants of the Earth were of one Language, and lived not far asunder, *Noah* himself living amongst them; the Judgment of God upon the wicked World, in overwhelming them with the Flood; his Mercies to *Noah* and his Family, in their preservation, when all the rest of the World perished; and the Commandments which God gave to *Noah* at his coming out of the Ark, with his Promises and Threatnings respectively to the performance

formance or transgression of them, must be well known: and the sin in building the Tower of *Babel*, for which the Universal Language was confounded, and the Race of Mankind dispersed, could proceed from nothing but the height of Presumption and Perverseness. After the Confusion of Languages, and the Dispersion of Mankind, they could not on the sudden remove to very distant and remote Places, by reason of the unpassable Woods and Desarts and Marshes, which, after so vast an Inundation, must be every where to be met with, to obstruct their passage, in those hot and fruitful Countreys, when they had lain uninhabited for so many Years. This we may the better understand, from the slow progress which was made in the Discoveries of the *West-Indies*. For the *Spaniards*, in those places where they found neither Guide nor Path, did not enter the Countrey ten Miles (f) in ten Years. And in those Ages they could not but be ill provided, either by their own Skill, or by convenient Tools and Instruments, with fit means to clear the Countrey which they were to pass; and they were likewise unprovided of Vessels to transport any great numbers of Men, with their Families, and Herds of Cattle, which were for many Ages their only Riches, and absolutely necessary for their Sustenance: for Navigation had never had so slow an Improvement in the World,

if

(f) See
Sir *W. Raleigh*,
l. 1.
c. 8. §. 3.

if it had so soon been in that Perfection as to enable them for such Transportations.

And as for these Reasons, the Dispersion of *Noah's* Posterity over the Earth must be gradual, and many Generations must pass, before the remoter Parts of it could be inhabited; so the several Plantations must be supposed to hold Correspondence with those to whom they were nearest allyed, and from whom they went out; they must be supposed to own some sort of Dependance upon them, and pay them such Acknowledgments as Colonies have ever done to their Mother-Cities. It is natural to suppose that they first spread themselves into the neighbouring Countries; and (as Sir *Walter Raleigh* has observed) the first Plantations were generally by the Banks of Rivers, whereby they might hold Intelligence one with another; which they could not do by Land, that being overspread with Woods, and altogether unfit for travelling. And the great affinity which is observable between the Eastern Languages, proves that there was a continual Correspondence and Commerce maintained between the several Nations, after the Dispersion.

All which, considering the great Age that Men lived to in those times, must, without a very gross Neglect and Contempt of God, preserve a true Notion of Religion in the several Parts of the World: For *Noah* himself lived Three Hundred and Fifty Years after
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the Flood; his Sons were not soon dispersed; their Dispersion was gradual, and they held a Correspondence after their Separation, and lived long to educate and train up their Children in that Knowledge of God, which they had received and been instructed in themselves; and besides, they had little else to discourse upon, but such things as would necessarily lead them to it: The History of their own Nation and Family is that which Men are naturally most fond of; and in these Ages the Particulars could be but few, and those very remarkable, and almost within the memory of some yet living; and every Occurrence must bring to their remembrance what they had heard and had been taught concerning God, and his Dealings with them and their Forefathers.

Moreover, there was the special Hand of God, and a particular Over-ruling Providence, in the Dispersion and Division of Nations: For, *when the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel, Deut. xxxii. 8. He determined the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply, they might feel after him, and find him, Act. xvii. 26, 27.* This was the reason of the Division of the Nations, according to the number of the children of Israel. There was a particular regard had to the Number
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of the Chosen Seed, that they might bear a fit proportion to the rest of Mankind, and might be as so much Leaven to the whole Mass, as a quickning and enlivening Principle to excite and maintain due Apprehensions of God, and his Worship and Service in the World: And this is the Reason given, why Polygamy was permitted them; That they who were the peculiar People of God, and were to teach his Commandments to the rest of the World, might sufficiently encrease and multiply. For though it appears by our Registers (g), that here more Males are born than Females, to a considerable disproportion, and that therefore Polygamy amongst us would not tend to the multiplication of Mankind, but rather to the contrary; yet in *Judæa* it might be otherwise; or the Captive Women, whom they were permitted to marry, might raise the number of Females above that of the Males; or their perpetual Wars lessen'd the number of Males to a degree beneath the Females. However, this is the reason alledged by learned Men, why Polygamy, which was not permitted from the Beginning, should be allowed the *Israelites*: for, indeed, it was of great consequence that they should multiply so as to have a due proportion to the rest of the World; and for the same reason, the surviving Brother was to raise up Seed to the deceased. Barrenness was a Reproach; and to die Childless, a
F Curse;

(g) See
Graunt on
the Bills of
Mortality.

Curse ; and a numerous Off-spring, a Blessing, so often promised, that it is evident that many Dispensations of the Divine Providence depended upon it.

(b) S. Hieron. Quæst. in Genes. s. August. Quæst. in Genes. l. v. qu. 25.

And the better to revive and keep up a Sense of Religion amongst Men, those who were most eminent for Piety were employed to be God's Heralds and Embassadors to the rest of the World, as the whole People of *Israel* are appealed to as his *Witnesses*, *Isai.* xliii. 12. and xliv. 8. The *Jews* have a Tradition, (b) That *Abraham* refusing to worship the Fire, the God of the *Chaldæans* was thrown by them into it, and was delivered out of it by Miracle : And therefore they understand it, not that he went forth from *Ur of the Chaldees*, as it signifies a Place, but from the *Fire* of the *Chaldees* ; *Ur* in the Hebrew Tongue signifying *Fire*. But we have no need of recourse to such Traditions : This is certain, *Abraham* was sent, by God's Command, out of *Chaldæa* into *Canaan* ; and there he had no fix'd or settled Habitation, but *journeyed, going on still towards the South*, *Gen.* xii. 9. till a Famine happening in that Countrey, the Providence of God so disposed of Things, that He and *Lot* went into *Ægypt*. And when he was there, he was by a very remarkable Accident taken great notice of by *Pharaoh* himself. For *Pharaoh* admiring the Beauty of *Sarah*, *Abraham's* Wife, takes her into his House : for which,

which, great Plagues were inflicted on him and his Household ; and *Pharaoh* perceiving the reason of it, sends him away, with his Wife, and all that he had. By this it became notorious to *Pharaoh* and his Princes, that *Abraham* was under God's peculiar Care and Providence, and that therefore it concerned them to regard what he professed concerning Religion, and the Worship of God. *Abimelech* likewise, King of *Gerar*, sent and took *Sarah* : Upon which God appeared to him in a Dream, and declared to him that *Abraham* was a Prophet, and that he should pray for him ; and this *Abimelech* told to all his servants, *Gen.* 20. 7, 8. and he calls upon God, by his Name *Jehovah*, ver. 4. which shews that he had Knowledge of the True God.

After *Abraham* and *Lot* were returned into *Canaan* from *Ægypt*, upon some disagreement between their Herds-men, they parted from each other, *Lot* going towards *Sodom*, and *Abraham* to the Plain of *Mamre*, in *Hebron*. And it came to pass, that there was War between Nine Kings of that Countrey, four being Confederate on the one side, and five on the other. But the King of *Sodom* and his Confederates being defeated in Battle, *Lot*, who dwelt in *Sodom*, was, with all his Goods, carried away by the Enemy : Of which when *Abraham* was informed, he armed his Servants, and with no more than

Three hundred and eighteen Men, gained a signal Victory, retook *Lot*, and brought him back, with all his Family and Goods. And at his return he is met by the King of *Sodom*, and by *Melchizedeck* King of *Salem*, who being *the Priest of the most high God*, in a most solemn manner blest *Abraham*, who gives him the Tenth of all his Spoil : Which whole Action must needs render *Abraham* mightily renowned in all that Countrey. So much Mercy did God extend to the *Canaanites*, who, after they had filled up the measure of their Iniquities, were to be rooted out, to make way for the *Israelites* to possess their Land ; that *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Melchizedeck*, and their Families, were appointed as Monitors and Instructors to them in the ways of Righteousness and Piety : And when all this was ineffectual to their Amendment, *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* were destroyed by a most miraculous and visible Judgment, with Fire from Heaven, after God had declared, at *Abraham's* Intercession, that if there had been but Ten Righteous Persons in those Cities, he would have saved the rest for their sakes. *Lot*, with his Family only, escaped this dreadful Judgment ; and his Wife looking back, out of fondness for the Place she had left, was turned into a Pillar of Salt ; which were so strange and so remarkable Judgments, that it must be a prodigious obstinacy in Sin, not to be reclaimed and brought to an acknowledgment of God's Power and Authority by them. The

The *Moabites* and the *Ammonites* were descended from *Lot*, and therefore it must be through their great Sin and Negligence, if they did not retain a true Notion of Religion : They had Possession given them of the Land they dwelt in, by God himself, by whom the former Inhabitants, a wicked and formidable Race of Giants, were destroyed before them, as the *Canaanites* afterwards were before the *Children of Israel*, *Deut. ii. 9, 19.* Our Saviour was descended from *Ruth* the *Moabites*. And the *Ammonites* are distinguished from the Heathen, *Ezek. xxv. 7.*

But as *Abraham* has the peculiar Character given him of, *the Friend of God*, and *the Father of the Faithful* ; so his Power and Influence was very great. He is said, (i) both by *Justin*, and *Nicolaus Damascenus*, to have been King of *Damascus* ; and the latter further adds, that in his own time the Name of *Abraham* was famous in that City, and that a Village was nominated from him, being called *Abraham's House* or *Palace*. He was a mighty Prince among the children of *Heth*, and was respected as such by them, *Gen. xxiii. 6, 10.* The *Saracens*, and other *Arabians*, were descended from *Abraham* ; and Circumcision, which was practised by so many Nations, being a Seal of the Covenant, and a Rite of Initiation, must be supposed to have some Notion of the Covenant it self commu-

(i) *Justin*,
l. 36. c. 2.
Nic. Damas. apud
Joseph. Antiqu. l. 1,
c. 8.

nicated together with it. For there is no probability that Circumcision, used as a Religious and Mysterious Rite, could have any other Original among Heathen Nations, than from *Abraham*; and the only Reason brought to prove that it had another beginning amongst them, is, because it was used upon a Natural Cause, and varied in the Time of Administration: but the Time might happen to be changed by some unknown Accident; and it was always, I think, used upon a Religious account, whatever Natural Causes might be likewise assigned; and such the *Jews* themselves were (k) wont to assign, as well as that of their Religion; and it is possible, that in some places, the Religious cause of its Observation might be forgot, and the Natural only retained.

(k) *Philo
Maimonid.*

Besides the other Sons of *Abraham*, which were many, *Isaac* and *Ishmael* must have been very instrumental in propagating the true Religion; and we can suppose none educated under *Abraham*, or belonging to him, but they must have been well qualified for that purpose, and must more or less retain the Impressions they had received from him: this being the Character which God himself gives of *Abraham*, *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,* Gen. xviii. 19. The *Jews* make particular mention of the care which both *Abrahams*
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and *Sarah* took in instructing Profelytes; and *Maimonides* [*de Idololatr.* l. i.] writes, that *Abraham* left a Book behind him upon that Subject. *Ishmael* was the Son of an *Ægyptian* Mother, Gen. xvi. 1. and his Wife was an *Ægyptian*: his Sons were Twelve in number, and of great Power, being stiled *Princes*, and their Dominions were of a large extent, Gen. xxv. 16, 18. *Isaac* was to marry none of the Daughters of *Canaan*, but one of his own Kindred; and a Messenger is sent into *Mesopotamia*, to bring *Rebekah* from thence, God directing and prospering him in his Journey: Which Alliance and Affinity renewed with the *Chaldeans*, could not fail of a good effect, for the preservation and advancement of Religion in those Countreys. But a Famine being again in the Land, *Isaac* removes to *Abimelech* King of the *Philistines*, unto *Gerar*, and by him the Beauty of *Rebekah* was admired, as *Sarah's* had been by *Pharaoh* in *Ægypt*, and here by *Abimelech*: but tho' he had said she was his *Sister* (as *Abraham* said likewise of *Sarah*) meaning in that latitude of the word usual in those Countries, whereby Women were call'd the *Sisters* of all to whom they were nearly related; yet the Providence of God so order'd it, that no Attempts should be made to her Dishonour, but the King of the *Philistines* had a great regard and reverence for *Isaac* and his Wife: the Blessing of God was visible in all his Undertakings; he became much
F 4 mightier

mightier than the *Philistines*, and therefore they envied him; which occasion'd his remove to *Beersheba*, whither *Abimelech*, with his Friends and Attendance, came to enter into a strict League and Covenant with him, professing that they *saw certainly that the Lord* (that is *Jehovah*, the True God) *was with him*, and declaring him to be *the blessed of the Lord*, Gen. xxvi. 11, 14, 16, 26. And for the same reason, the *Philistines* had formerly desired to make a Covenant with *Abraham*, saying, *God is with thee in all that thou dost*, &c. Gen. xxi. 22.

Esau, at the Age of Forty Years, marry'd two Wives of the Daughters of the *Hittites*, Gen. xxvi. 34. which, tho' it grieved *Isaac* and *Rebekah*, who would have had him marry with their own Kindred, yet must give the *Hittites* further Opportunities of acquainting themselves with the Religion and Worship of the *Hebrews*; but he marries besides a Daughter of *Ishmael*, *Abraham's* Son, Gen. xxviii. 9. which confirmed and strengthened the Alliance between the true Believers. *Esau* was the Father of the *Edomites*, and of a numerous Off-spring of Dukes or Princes, Gen. xxxvi. 9. And according to the Custom and Design of the Book of *Genesis*, the Generations descended from *Esau* had not been so particularly set down, unless they had retained the Knowledge and Worship of the True God. The *Edomites*, as well as the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, were
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put into possession of their Countrey by the same Divine Power by which the *Israelites* became possessors of the Land of *Canaan*, and the Children of *Israel* were not to meddle with them, Deut. ii. 5.

Jacob is sent to *Padan-Aram*, to take to Wife one of the Daughters of *Laban*, and with him he abode twenty Years, Gen. xxxi. 38. and all which he took in hand prospered so, that there was the visible Power and Blessing of God in it, as *Laban* confessed, Gen. xxx. 27. *Isaac* was not to leave the Land of *Canaan*, but was forbid to remove into *Ægypt*, when there was a Famine in the Land, Gen. xxvi. 2. and he was not upon any account to return into *Chaldæa*, or to go out of *Canaan*, Gen. xxiv. 6, 8. but *Jacob* went out of it, when there were enough of *Abraham's* House besides to keep up a sense of the true Religion among the *Canaanites*.

Afterwards God manifested himself to the *Ægyptians* by a various and wonderful Providence: for the Children of *Israel* dwelt in *Ægypt* Four hundred and fifty Years, till at last, by Signs and Wonders, and dreadful Judgments; by Judgments upon their *First-born*, and upon *their Gods*, Num. xxxiii. 4. they were brought out from thence; and *the nations heard the fame of it*, and *all the earth was filled with the glory of the Lord*, Num. xiv. 15, 21.

Thus *Chaldæa* and *Ægypt*, the most famous and flourishing Countreys in those Ages of
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the World, had the true Religion brought home to them by the Patriarchs, who were sent from place to place to sojourn, to be a Pattern and Example to the rest of Mankind. And Men who travell'd so far, and conversed with so many Nations, and were so zealous for God's Honour, and had such frequent Revelations, and the immediate Direction of God himself in most of the Actions of their Lives, and who were so Great and Powerful, and so Numerous, must needs mightily propagate Religion where-ever they came, and leave the Idolaters without excuse; and it cannot be doubted but that they had great success in all places; for even out of *Ægypt*, where they endured the greatest hardship, and were in such contempt and hatred, yet *a mix'd multitude went up also with them*, besides the Native *Israelites*, *Exod. xii. 38.*

And as *Chaldæa* and *Ægypt* were famous for Learning and Commerce, and proper Places, by their situation, from whence the Notions of Religion might be propagated both towards the East and the West, to other Parts of the World; so I must again observe, that God's Mercy was particularly manifested towards the *Canaanites* before their Destruction: The Example of *Melchizedeck*, who reigned among them, and the sojourning of *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, not to mention *Ishmael* and *Esau*, with their numerous Families, afforded them continual In-

vitations,

vitations, and Admonitions for their Instruction and Amendment; especially the Judgment upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and the miraculous Deliverance of *Lot*, was enough to strike an Awe and Terrour into the most Obdurate. But when they would not make any due use of these Mercies, when they persisted still in their Impieties, and proceeded in them till they had filled up the measure of their Iniquities: God made them an Example to others, after they would take no Warning themselves; yet still *executing his judgments upon them by little and little, he gave them place of repentance, not being ignorant that they were a naughty generation, and that their malice was bred in them, and that their cogitation would never be changed,* *Wisd. xii. 10.*

How much the true Religion prevailed by these Dispensations of Providence, among other Nations besides the *Hebrews*, we have an *illustrious* Instance in *Job* and his Friends, who were Princes in their several Dominions; they had knowledge of the Fall of the Angels, *Job iv. 18.* and of the Original Corruption of Man, which is expressed with this emphasis, *that he cannot be clean, or righteous, who is born of a woman*; because by *Eve's* Transgression, Sin came into the World, *Job xiv. 1. xv. 14. and xxv. 4.* *Adam* is mention'd, *chap. xxxi. 33.* the Resurrection is described, *chap. xiv. 12.* and it appears that Revelations were vouch-

safed

safed to these Nations, *chap. xxxiii. 15.* It appears, that the Fundamentals of Religion were known Doctrines amongst them, and are therefore mention'd both by *Job* himself, and by his Friends, in as plain terms as may be, and as fully as can be expected in a Book which is Poetical, the nature whereof requires that known things should be alluded to, but not so particularly related as in History. And there is no doubt but the Propagation of Religion, in other Parts of the World, would be as evident, if the Scriptures had not occasionally only, and in the course of other things, but of set purpose treated of this Matter; as we may gather from the footsteps to be found in Heathen Authors, of what the Scriptures deliver to us, and from the several Allusions and Representations in the Rites and Ceremonies of their Religions, expressing, though obscurely and confusedly, the chief Points of the Scripture-story, as has been shewn by divers learned Men.

2. In succeeding Ages, after the giving the Law, when the *Jews*, by their Laws concerning Religion and Government, may seem to have been wholly separated from the rest of the World, and the Divine Revelations confined to one Nation, there still were sufficient Means and frequent Opportunities for all Nations to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. And here I shall shew, (1.) That the Law of *Moses* did particularly provide for the

the Instruction of other Nations in the Revealed Religion, and that the Scriptures give frequent Commandment and Encouragement concerning it. (2.) That the Providence of God did so order and dispose of the *Jews* in their Affairs, as to offer other Nations frequent Opportunities of becoming instructed in the true Religion, and that multitudes of Profelytes were made of all Nations.

1. The Law of *Moses* did particularly provide for the Instruction of other Nations in the Revealed Religion, and the Scriptures give frequent Commandment and Encouragement concerning it. The *Strangers* or *Profelytes*, amongst the *Jews*, were of two sorts: for either they were such as became Circumcised, and obliged themselves to the Observation of the whole Law of *Moses*, who were styled *Profelytes of Righteousness*, or of the Covenant; or they were such as believed in the True God, and professed only to observe the Precepts given to *Noah*, which comprised the Substance of the Ten Commandments; and these were called *Profelytes of the Gates*, because they were permitted to live amongst them, within their Gates; these are the *Strangers in their Gates*, mention'd *Deut. xiv. 21.* who might eat of such things as the *Israelites* themselves were forbidden to eat of.

If any would be Circumcised, and undertake the Observation of the whole Law, they had full liberty, and the greatest encouragement

to do it. At the first Institution of Circumcision, not only *Abraham* and his Seed, but his whole Family, and all that were bought *with money of any Stranger*, were to be circumcised, *Gen. xvii. 12, 27.* and at the Institution of the Passover, the Stranger is commanded to observe it, as well as the Natural *Israelite*, *Exod. xii. 19.* God made no distinction in the Institution of both these Sacraments between the *Jews* and those other Nations that dwelt amongst them, and were willing to conform themselves to the Observation of the Law; but first to *Abraham*, when he appointed Circumcision, and then to *Moses*, when the Passover was instituted, particular Order is given concerning *Strangers* or *Profelytes*, who would betake themselves to them, *one law shall be to him that is home-born, and to the stranger that sojourneth among you, Exod. xii. 49. Deut. xxix. 11.* And as the receiving the Seal of Circumcision was an admission into Covenant with God, and implied an Obligation to observe the whole Law, and a Right to the Privileges of it, which was confirmed and renewed by their partaking of the Passover: so it is to be observed, not only that God did in general admit Strangers and Aliens to the same Worship with the *Jews*, but that throughout their whole Law frequent mention is made of them, and care taken for their Reception and Behaviour: for though what is but once said in Scripture, is a sufficient Proof of the Will and Pleasure

Pleasure of God in any matter; yet when a thing is often mention'd, and every where inculcated, it is an evidence to us, that God would have the more notice taken of it, and has laid the strictest Obligation upon all to observe it. But we find express mention made of the *Stranger* at the appointment of the Yearly Feast of Atonement, *Lev. xvi. 29.* The Stranger was obliged to bring his Sacrifice to the Door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation; and in the Prohibitions of eating Blood, he is particularly forbidden it, *chap. xvii. 8, 9, 12, 15.* All the Laws relating to Marriage, and concerning unlawful Lust, are equally enjoin'd the *Stranger* and the *Israelite*, *ch. xviii. 26.* he was to be stoned, if he gave any of his Seed unto *Moloch*, *chap. xx. 2.* and he was obliged to all the same Laws concerning Sacrifices, *chap. xxii. 18.* and was to be stoned for Blasphemy, *chap. xxiv. 16.* The Sabbath was appointed to the Stranger within their Gates, *Exod. xx. 10. & xxiii. 12. Lev. xxv. 6. Deut. v. 14.* The Stranger was to hear the Law read in the Solemnity of the Year of Release, *chap. xxxi. 12.* And the Covenant is expressly made with the Stranger, *chap. xxix. 12. Josh. viii. 33, 35.*

And as the *Strangers* or *Profelytes* were thus join'd, in the very Design and Institution of the Law, with the Native *Israelites* themselves, as to all the Acts and Privileges of Religious Worship; so God had a particular regard to them in their Civil Statutes and Ordi-

Ordinances, to free them from Oppression, and every thing that might give Strangers any discouragement from living amongst the *Israelites*, and becoming Partakers of their Religion with them: *Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Ægypt, Exod. xxii. 21. Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Ægypt, chap. xxiii. 9.* It seems, one reason of their being so long detained in *Ægypt*, was to teach them humanity and compassion to Strangers: *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates, Deut. xxiv. 14.* And care is taken of the Stranger, that he be not brought into want, or suffered to perish in his distress; for the Gleanings of the Harvest and of the Vintage were his portion: *Thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord, Lev. xix. 10. & xxiii. 22.* All manner of Kindness and Affection is in most express and ample terms commanded towards all Strangers: *And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him: But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thy self; for ye were strangers in the land of Ægypt: I am the Lord your God, Lev. xix. 33, 34.* And *Moses*, repeating the peculiar Favours which God had bestowed upon

upon

upon the *Children of Israel*, put them in mind, that *God loveth the stranger, in giving him food and rayment. Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Ægypt, Deut. x. 18, 19.* The *Widow*, the *Stranger* and the *Fatherless* are usually mention'd together in Scripture, as being jointly the care of God's more peculiar Providence, and he recommends them to the charity of his People; and to oppress the Stranger, is reckoned the highest aggravation of wickedness: *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless: yet they say, The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it, Ps. xciv. 6, 7.* *The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully, Ezek. xxii. 29.* And to the same purpose, *Psal. cxlvi. 9. Jer. vii. 6. and xxii. 3. Zech. vii. 10. Mal. iii. 5.*

Though their Bond-men and Bond-women were not to be of the native *Israelites*, but of the *Heathen* that were round about them, and of the *Strangers* that dwelt amongst them, *Lev. xxv. 44.* yet an *Israelite* might sell himself to a *Stranger*, and become his *Servant*; but he might be redeemed again, either by himself, or by his near *Kinsman*; and was to be released at the *Year of Jubilee, ver. 47.* The *Cities of Refuge* were provided for the *Stranger* and the *Sojourner, Num. xxxv. 15. Josh. xx. 9.* The *Judges* were particularly commanded to

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execute

execute righteous and impartial Judgment to the Stranger, *Deut. i. 16.* A caution is given, that neither the *Edomites* nor the *Ægyptians* were to be *abhorred* by them, but their Children were to be received into the Congregation of the Lord, in the Third Generation; that is, after any *Edomite* or *Ægyptian* had lived amongst them as a *Profelyte of the Gates*, their Children of the Third Generation might be capable of Circumcision, and be admitted to the Observation of the whole Law, *ch. xxiii. 7.* And though the *Ammonite* and *Moabite* were excluded, even to the Tenth Generation, from the Congregation of the Lord, by reason of their inhumanity to the *Israelites*, at their coming out of *Ægypt*, *ver. 3.* yet neither were they of the preceding Generations debar'd from becoming *Profelytes of the Gates*, and undertaking the Observation of the Precepts of *Noah*.

A Promise is made, that the Stranger shall rejoice in the good things of the Land, *chap. xxvi. 11.* and the *Israelites* are threatned, that upon their Disobedience, the Stranger should be more prosperous than they, *ch. xxviii. 43, 44.* King *Solomon*, at the Dedication of the Temple, makes such particular mention of the *Stranger*, in his Prayer, as shews both the design of building it, and of all the Jewish Worship to be such as that other Nations might share in it, and withal, he foretells what the event should be: *Moreover, concerning a*
Stranger

Stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country, for thy names sake; (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm) when he shall come and pray towards this house: Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built, is called by thy name, 1 King. viii, 41, 42, 43. 2 Chron. vi. 33. This was the House of Prayer for all people, Isa. lvi. 7. Mar. xi. 17. And the Prophets, in their Prophecies concerning the return of the Jews out of their Captivity in Babylon, and in their Predictions of the Messias, did not omit to insert peculiar Expressions of God's Love and Favour to Strangers and Profelytes, to shew that the Promises did extend to them, as well as to the Native Jews themselves, Isa. lvi. 3. Ezech. xlvii. 22, 23.

From all which, it is evident, that Strangers were equally capable of the Privileges and Advantages in the Jewish Worship, as the Jews themselves were; and that they were debar'd of very little in their Civil Rights: and all Encouragement imaginable was given to *Strangers* to come and dwell amongst the *Jews*: The Law joins them together with the Natural *Israelite*, both in the Curses it denounces, and in the Blessings it promises; it severely threatens all that should oppress or

defraud them ; it commands the same charity towards them, as towards the *Fatherless* and *Widow*, the greatest Objects of Humane Compassion, and of the merciful Care and Providence of God : And the Prophets, with the utmost severity, rebuke the *Jews* for any oppression or abuse of them. The *Profelytes* were not excluded from their Sacrifices, their Prayers and Sacraments ; and if they refused to take upon them the Observation of the whole Law, yet they had free leave and great encouragement to live amongst them, believing only in the True God, and obeying those Precepts which were given to all the Race of Mankind after the Flood : They might share in all the Rites of their Religious Worship, and were invited to do it ; but if they would not submit to this, yet they were not therefore rejected, but might partake of their Civil Privileges, and live under the protection of their Government : And it is observable, that where the same Laws are repeated in several places of Scripture, the *Stranger* is no where omitted ; but what relates to him, is constantly repeated with the rest, as a necessary and essential part of the Law. So that never any Government had so particular regard for Strangers, or was so peculiarly contrived for their encouragement to live under it. Other Governments, as those of *Sparta* and *China*, have been so jealous of Foreigners, that, by their Original Constitution, they have forbid
any

any Dealings with them, and would not suffer them to abide in their Cities. And the *Romans* (l) had some Laws to the same effect ; which *Tully*, indeed, says was an *inhumane* thing. The Freedom and Privilege of a Citizen of *Rome* was purchased at a great Price, *Act. xxii. 28.* and in their Leagues (m) with divers Nations, the *Romans* inserted this express Condition, That *none* of them should be made Free of the City. The *Athenians* (n) had a Tax, call'd *Μετοίκιον*, to be paid Yearly by all Foreigners, both Men and Women ; and they were so severe in exacting it, that those who were unable to pay it, were sold. But the *Jewish* Government, on the contrary, was so adapted and contrived for the reception of foreign Nations, that if they would but comply with their Laws, they made little or no distinction between the Natives and Strangers ; and the owning the True God, and professing to obey and serve him, entitled them not only to all the Rights of Humanity and Kindness, but to a more peculiar Care and Providence of God himself.

If the *Jews* did not always shew so much Humanity to Strangers as their Law required, this is to be ascribed wholly to their own fault ; and it is not the only Law which they were too prone to disobey : yet in the corruptest state of the *Jewish* Church, the *Gentiles* had a Court to worship in at the Temple : And the *Jews* always taught, That it was
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(o) Doctor
Lightfoot
on A. T. x.
28. and
Hebr. and
Talmud
Exercitat.
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vi. 2.

their Duty to relieve the *Heathen* with their Alms (o); and that it was lawful to converse with the *Gentiles*, if they did not eat with them, nor go into their Houses. But what effect this abundant provision of the Law, for the Conversion of other Nations, had, falls under the next Head. It is more proper to consider, in this place, an Objection which comes in our way; That the *Israelites* were to make no Marriages nor Covenants with the Seven Nations of the Land of *Canaan*, nor to shew them any Mercy, but utterly to destroy them, or drive them out, *Exod. xxiii. 31. Deut. vii. 2.*

To which I Answer, That this was a peculiar and excepted Case, and therefore supposes that they were not thus to deal with any others, except the Nations there expressly named, but they might enter into Marriages and Covenants with all other Nations: And besides what has been already observed, of the great Mercy which God vouchsafed to these Nations, in sending the Patriarchs to sojourn amongst them; and that wonderful Judgment upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, to bring them to Repentance, and prevent that Destruction which was at last brought upon them: after so long and great Provocations, these Nations were not unavoidably to be extirpated; but the *Israelites* were, in the first place, to profer Peace to them; and if they refused to accept of Peace, then they were to proceed

proceed against them in the utmost extremity; which appears from *Deut. xx. 10, &c.* For after a general Command to offer Terms of Peace to the Cities which they should go to fight against; and if they refused it, to smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword, ver. 13. it is added, ver. 15. *Thus shalt thou do to all the cities that are very far from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them, &c.* where it is evident, that what concerns their making Proposals of Peace, was to be understood in general of all Nations with whom they should at any time have War. But then in their dealings with them upon a Victory, after their refusal of the Peace offered, they were to distinguish between the *Canaanites* and other Nations: for the *Canaanites* were to be utterly destroyed, if they should reject Terms of Peace; but all, except the *Males*, were to be spared of other Nations, though they were overcome, after they had refused to make Peace with them: And the Terms of Peace to be proposed, were, That they should become Tributaries, and Profelytes, so far as to own and worship the True God, and then the reason for their extirpation ceased; which was, That these Idolatrous Nations might not teach the *Children of Israel* to do after all their abominations,

The Reasonableness and Certainty

nations which they had done unto their gods, Deut. xx. 18.

When the Men of *Israel* tell the *Gibeonites*, Peradventure ye dwell among us, and how shall we make a league with you? Josh. ix. 7. this is to be understood of a League with them upon equal Terms, not of a Peace, whereby they might become Tributaries, Deut. xx. 11. and therefore the *Gibeonites* immediately answer'd and said to *Joshua*, We are thy servants, Josh. ix. 8. that is, Do with us as you please, at least grant us our Lives, though not upon any other Terms of a League, yet on Conditions of Servitude: and we find the Peace and the League distinguished, Josh. ix. 15. But this fraudulent way of getting into a League with the *Israelites*, if it had not been for the Oath, which secured their Lives to them, had forfeited that Right which otherwise they might have had to their Lives, by a Peace fairly obtained; and they lost all other Advantages of the League, but only the securing their Lives. But that the *Canaanites*, if they had submitted and owned the God of *Israel*, were not to have been destroyed, but to have been received to mercy, is evident from Josh. xi. 19, 20. There was not a city that made peace with the children of *Israel*, save the *Hivites* the inhabitants of *Gibeon*; all other they took in battel: For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against *Israel* in battel, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour,

of the Christian Religion.

favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded *Moses*. Which necessarily supposes, that if God, in his just Judgment upon them, for their heinous Provocations, had not hardened their hearts, but they had submitted themselves, and sought Peace of the Children of *Israel*, they ought to have had favour shewn them. It doth therefore sufficiently appear, that the *Canaanites* themselves, after all their Provocations against both the Mercy and Justice of God, were not excluded from all the Benefits of *Strangers* and *Profelytes* amongst the *Jews*; and that all other Nations were encouraged and invited to become Partakers of the Privileges of the Law of *Moses*, and acquaint themselves with the Service and Worship of the True God, is notorious, and as evident as any thing in the Law and the Prophets. But after the *Canaanites* had fill'd up the measure of their Iniquities, God manifested his Almighty Power and Justice upon them; and he was pleased to do it by the Sword of the Children of *Israel*, rather than by Pestilence, or any other Judgment, both to raise the greater abhorrence of Idolatry in his own People, and in the neighbouring Nations; and because those rude and warlike Nations could observe the Power of God no where so much as in the success of War, they chiefly implored their own Gods for success in their Wars; and when they were overcome by any People, they concluded that the Gods

Gods of that Nation were too hard for their own Gods, 1 *King*. xx. 23. 2 *King*. viii. 34. whereas, if they had been destroyed by Famine or Pestilence, they would have ascribed these Judgments no more to the God of *Israel*, than to any of the Heathen Gods. But God got him honour upon these Nations, as he did upon *Pharaoh* and upon all his host, when *Jethro* said, Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them, *Exod.* xviii. 11. from whence he is so often stiled the Lord of Hosts, in the Old Testament.

2. The Providence of God did so order and dispose of the *Jews*, in all their Affairs, as to afford other Nations frequent opportunities of becoming instructed in the true Religion, and multitudes of *Profelytes* were made out of all Nations. *Moses* dwelt in *Midian*, and there marry'd an *Æthiopian* Woman, *Exod.* ii. 15. *Num.* xii. 1. his Wife's Father, *Jethro* the Priest of *Midian*, and his Family, became converted. And the Deliverance of the Children of *Israel* out of *Ægypt*, magnify'd the Power of God in all Countries where the Report of a thing so wonderful and notorious came. The miraculous Victories which the *Israelites* gained over the *Canaanites*, wherever they came, struck a mighty Terror into all those Nations; as we see by the Fear of *Balak*, *Num.* xxii. and from the Speech of the *Gibeonites*, *Josh.* ix. 9, 10. who were glad
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to make use of any Pretence, as an Expedient to save themselves. *Rahab*, with her Family and Kindred, and the *Gibeonites*, were early Accessions to the *Israelites*; and *Rahab* was marry'd to a Man of *Israel*; and the *Babylonian Gemara* (p) reckons up Eight Prophets, who were likewise Priests, descended from her: This is certain, that our Saviour himself was pleased to derive his Genealogy from her. The various Successes of the *Israelites* in the Land of *Canaan*, their Victories and their Overthrows, and the miraculous Power of God visibly appearing either in their Defeat and Punishment, or in their Conquest or Deliverance, must needs raise a mighty Fame and Admiration of the God of *Israel* in all those Countries: for they proclaimed a Religious War upon these Nations; they destroyed their Images and Groves and Altars where-ever they came; and the People plainly perceived that their Gods could not help them. The Taking of *Jericho*, not by Storm, but only by the meer Sound and Alarm of War, the Lengthning of the Day, to favour their Conquests, and the Destruction of so many Kings by *Moses* and *Joshua*, were undeniable Evidences of a Divine Power, and must awaken Men to make enquiry into that Religion which could inspire such Courage, and work such Wonders. And these Nations among whom the Patriarchs had sojourned, and so many Wonders and Judgments

(p) Light-foot Hebr. and Talmud Exercitat. in Mat. i. 5.

ments had been wrought, were dispersed in Colonies over all Parts of the World, (as *Bochart* has proved at large, in a most learned and elaborate Work;) some of them (if we may believe *Procopius*) erecting a Pillar in *Africk*, as a Monument of *Joshua's* Victories, with an Inscription declaring that they were driven out of their own Countrey by him: And *St. Augustine* says, (q) that in his time, the Countrey People about *Hippo* called themselves *Canaanites*.

(q) *Aug.*
Exposit. E-
pist. ad
Rom.

After the death of *Joshua*, the *Israelites* were in subjection to the King of *Mesopotamia* eight Years; to the King of *Moab* eighteen Years, *Judg.* iii. 8, 14. to *Jabin* King of *Canaan*, *chap.* iv. 1. to the *Midianites* seven Years, *chap.* vi. 1. to the *Philistines* forty Years, *chap.* xiii. 1. And still it was because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord, that they were given up into the hand of their Enemies: and upon their Repentance, a Deliverance was wrought for them, *1 Sam.* xii. 10. And when they were so often and for so long a time subdued by their Enemies round about them, for their Idolatries, and other Transgressions; and then again, upon their Repentance, were rescued from their oppression by *Gideon*, and *Jephtha*, and *Samson*, all raised up for that purpose; this must give great occasion and opportunity to all the bordering Nations to know and consider that Religion, the observation or neglect whereof had

had such visible effects upon its Professors: for under their Affliction, and in the time of their Repentance, the *Israelites* declared the cause of their Misery, and made known the Power of their own God, and the Vanity and Sinfulness of Idolatry. And therefore their being so often and so long time under the Oppression of their several Enemies, was a merciful Providence to the Nations who had them in subjection, as well as for the Punishment and Amendment of the *Israelites* themselves. What good use was made of these Methods of the Divine Providence doth not appear to us, but in all probability it had a good effect upon very many; as we find it had in one remarkable Instance of a little Maid, who being taken Captive, was the occasion of the Cure of *Naaman's* Leprosie; and of his Conversion to the Worship of the True God, who before was known to him by his Name *Jehovah*, *2 King.* v. 11. The Prophet *Elisha* was well known by the *Syrians* to be a Prophet, and *Ben-hadad* sent to enquire of the Lord by him, *chap.* viii. 8. *Rabshakeh* speaks in the *Jews* Language, and pretends a Commission from the Lord, that is, from *Jehovah*, the God of the *Jews*, when he came against *Jerusalem*, *Isa.* xxxvi. 10, 11. God himself appeals to the knowledge of *Sennacherib* King of *Assyria*; *Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times, that I have formed*

(r) Light-foot Harm. Luke iv. 15. p. 612.

formed it, Isa. xxxvii. 26. And Rabbi *She-maiab* and Rabbi *Abtalion* are (r) said to have been *Profelytes of Righteousness*, of the Posterity of *Sennacherib*. *Pharaoh Necho*, King of *Ægypt*, alledges God's Command, when he came to fight against *Carchemish*, 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22.

But our present Enquiry is not so much what the Effect was, as what Means were afforded of Salvation: For though it be requisite that the True Revealed Religion should be published to the World; yet it is not necessary to prove the Truth of a Religion, to shew that obstinate Men have taken notice of it, so far as to consider and believe it; because it is not necessary that God should force his Laws upon Men, but only that he should discover them, and afford Men sufficient Means to know them, and become the better for them.

To proceed then: The *Philistines* were in a wonderful Consternation, when they understood that the Ark was brought into the Camp, 1 Sam. iv. 7, 8. And when it was taken by them, it was more terrible to them, than the Enemy, if he had conquer'd them, could have been; they were tormented with Diseases and Plagues, where-soever the Ark was carried; and their God was so little able to help them, that he fell down before it, and was broken in pieces; whereof they retained a Memorial in the
Worship

Worship of him ever after, in not treading upon the Threshold of *Dagon*, in *Ashdod*, because he had lost the Palms of his Hands, by falling upon it, 1 Sam. v. 4, 5. The *Philistines*, at last, received a miraculous Overthrow by Thunder, 1 Sam. vii. 10. And these were so remarkable Judgments, that they must be left without all excuse, who did not forsake their Idolatries, and turn to the Living God who had thus manifested himself amongst them.

The *Urim and Thummim* (s) was consulted (s) *Judg.* upon any great Undertaking, whereby God i. 1. & xx. 18, 23, 26. returned his Answer, and often-times, before the Battel, gave assurance of Victory; 1 Sam. xviii. 6. & xxiii. 9. & xxx. 7, 8. which was so well known among the *Heathen*, that they called it the *Oracle*. (t) *Josephus* (t) *Joseph.* says, the Answer was returned, by the shining *Antiq.* i. 3. c. 10. of the Stones in the High-Priest's Breast-plate, in such a manner, as that it was visible to all the People standing by.

The miraculous Victories of *Saul*, and *Jonathan*, and *David*; and *David's* stay with *Achish* King of the *Philistines*, at *Gath*, and the Favour and Confidence which he gained with that King, gave the *Canaanites* still repeated Opportunities and Motives to Conversion and Repentance; and we may observe *Achish*, in discourse with *David*, mentioning the Name of the Lord, or *Jehovah*, and swearing by his Name, 1 Sam. xxix. 6. Which shews the infinite Mercy and Com-
passion

passion of God towards this People devoted to Destruction, in that he would not take them away suddenly, but by little and little, giving them space for repentance; and turning that, which might seem to rash Judges a hard fate, into a Means of Salvation both to themselves and others.

David extended his Conquest far and near, and was renowned throughout all those Countries: *And the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations*, 1 Chron. xiv. 17. and when God had delivered him out of the hand of all his Enemies, he makes this Resolution, *Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and will sing praises unto thy name*, 2 Sam. xxii. 50. Psal. xviii. 49. *Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. Say among the heathen, that the Lord is King*, Psal. xcvi. 3, 10. He knew this to be the Design of God, in the Dispensations of his Providence; and accordingly he made this Use of it, with so good effect, that in the beginning of Solomon's Reign, the Strangers or Profelytes in the Land were found to be *an hundred and fifty thousand, and three thousand and six hundred*, 2 Chron. ii. 17.

In Solomon's Reign, the Kingdom of Israel became yet more famous and flourishing; Hiram King of Tyre held great Correspondence with Him and Kimchi: And after him,
Dr. Light-

Dr. Lightfoot (u) understands by 2 Chron. viii. 2. that Hiram gave Cities to Solomon in his own Land, who placed Israelites in them; and He, in like manner gave Cities to Hiram, in Galilee, 1 King. ix. 11. in Confirmation of the League between them. The Letters which passed between Solomon and Hiram (x) were extant in the time of Josephus; and from his time, down to Theophilus Antiochenus. Hiram blesteth the Lord God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, 2 Chron. ii. 12. 1 King. v. 7. which shews that he had a true Notion and Sense of Religion. And Tyre was a place of great Trade and Commerce, Ezek. xxvii. from whence the Jews were afterwards sold to the Græcians, Joel iii. 6. there was no place of greater Traffick, nor that sent out more Colonies, or greater, or into more distant Parts of the World; and therefore none could be more proper to establish a Correspondence with, from whence Religion might be better propagated. The Queen of Sheba came to see the Glory of Solomon's Kingdom, 1 King. ix. 10. and blesteth the Lord his God, chap. x. 9. who, according to (y) Josephus, was Queen both of Ægypt and Æthiopia. His Wisdom was every where magnified: *And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom*, chap. iv. 34. *All the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart*, chap. x. 24. His Dominions
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(u) Lightfoot Chorograph. Decad. on Str. Mark, c. 6. S. 2. p. 311.

(x) Theoph. ad Autolyc. l. 3. p. 254.

(y) Joseph. Antiq. l. 8. c. 6.

were exceeding great: *He reigned over all the kings from the river (Euphrates) even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Ægypt, 2 Chron. ix. 26.* The Trade and Correspondence of the *Israelites* with foreign Nations was mightily advanced in his time; their Trade extended as far as *Tarshish* and *Ophir*. *Tarshish* is translated *Carthage*, by the *Septuagint*, *Isa. xxiii. 6.* but is supposed to be *Tartessus*, in *Spain*, though *St. Jerom* (z) thought it to be in the *Indies*. And *Ophir* was, as many learned Men think, in the *Indies*, beyond the *River Ganges*, in *Pegu*, or at least, *Solomon's* Merchants did traffick with the *Indians* that came from those Parts; others have imagined *Ophir* to be *Zephala*, or *Cephala*, in *Africa*, towards the *Cape of Good-Hope*: some think it to be *Ceylon*, or *Sumatra*: some are of opinion that it was in *America*: all are agreed that it must be in some very distant part of the World; and where-ever it were, the Traffick and Dealings which the *Israelites* had there, was a great opportunity to the *Heathen* to become instructed in the True Religion.

The Traffick and Voyages by Sea, and Expeditions by Land, in *Solomon's* Reign, rendered the People of *Israel* highly renowned, and caused their Laws and Customs and Religion to be much observed and enquired into; and even the Marriages of *Solomon* with *Pharaoh's* Daughter and other Strangers, questionless,

tionless, through the Mercy of God, might prove an happy occasion of divulging the True Religion, and regaining many from Idolatry, in *Ægypt*, and other Parts of the World: For all his Wives were made *Profelytes* (a) before he married them, (as *Samson's* likewise had been,) though afterwards they not only fell away to their former Idolatries, but seduced *Solomon* himself into them.

The *Gentiles* were so forward to become *Profelytes*, (b) in the Reigns of *David* and *Solomon*, that their Sincerity became suspected; and the *Jews* tell us, that the *Sanhedrim* would admit no *Profelytes*, in the days of *David*, lest they should be induced to it by Fear; nor in the days of *Solomon*, lest the Glory of his Kingdom should have been the motive to them to profess the Religion of the *Israelites*. Nevertheless, great numbers were received privately by Baptism, the *Sanhedrim* neither rejecting nor admitting them.

It is the Observation of *Theodoret*, and of *St. Jerom*, upon *Ezek. v. 5.* that God placed *Jerusalem*, the Seat of the *Jewish* Government, in the midst of the Nations, that it might be a Direction to the *Heathen* in matters of Religion; from whence, as from the Centre, Light might be communicated to the farther Parts of the Earth. But the Divisions and Calamities of the People of *Israel*, the Destruction of their City, and Dispersion of their whole Nation, contributed as much to

(z) Hier. in Jon. c. 1. initio.

(a) Maimonid. de Profelyt. §. 15, 16.

(b) Maimonid. ib.

the propagation of Religion, as their greatest Prosperity could do.

The Division of the Ten Tribes, after the death of *Solomon*, and the erection of the Kingdom of *Israel*, distinct from that of *Judah*, with the many Leagues and Wars which these two mighty Kingdoms had with the Kings of *Ægypt*, and *Syria*, and *Babylon*, and with other Nations, could not but exceedingly conduce to the divulging the True Religion in the World, and give opportunity to the Prophets to declare their Prophecies, and work their Miracles among the *Heathen*; as we find they did in many Instances. One of the greatest Cities of the World was converted by *Jonah's* Preaching. *Hezekiah* being distressed by *Sennacherib*, prayed to God for deliverance out of his hand; for *that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only*: and his Prayer was answer'd not only in the Deliverance, but in the manner of it; which was so wonderful, that all must know and be astonished at it; for that very night *the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand*, 2 King. xix. 19. which was the fulfilling of the Prophecy of *Isaiab*, delivered to *Hezekiah*, in a Message to Him from God, in Answer to his Prayer: and afterwards Embassadors came from the King of *Babylon*, to enquire of the Wonder, or Miracle, that was wrought

wrought in his Recovery from his Sickness, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. and at last, the Captivity of the *Jews*, for Seventy Years, in *Babylon*, made their Religion almost as well-known there, as in *Jerusalem* it self. *Jeremiah* had foretold the Captivity of the *Jews*, and the Conquest of all the adjacent Countries, so long and so plainly, before-hand, that all the neighbour Nations must be sensible of it, as *Nebuchadnezzar* himself also was; for which reason, he gave a strict charge concerning *Jeremiah*, to *Nebuzaradan* the Captain of the Guard, who declares the reason of their Captivity to be, their sins against the Lord, or *Jehovah*, Jer. xl. 3. and, as the *Jews* say, he became a *Profelyte*. God professes, that he had a regard to the Honour of his Name among the *Heathen*, in his Mercies vouchsafed to the *Children of Israel*, or else he had utterly consumed them, Ezek. xx. 9. and xxxvi. 22, 23, 36. and the Judgments upon the several Nations prophesied against, were to this end, that they might *know him to be the Lord*, Ezek. xxv. 7, 17. & xxvi. 6. & xxviii. 22, 23, 24. & xxix. 6. & xxxv. 9. & xxxvi. 23. & xxxvii. 28. *I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen*, Mal. i. 14. The *Jews*, in their Captivity, are commanded to make an open Declaration against the *Heathen Gods*; and because they understood not the *Chaldee Tongue*, the Prophet *Jeremiah* supplies them

with so much of the Language as might serve them for that purpose ; *Thus shall ye say unto them*, Jer. x. 11. that is, Ye shall speak to them in their own Language, and in the words which I now set down to you, to bid Defiance to their False Gods. Thus did he fulfil his Commission and Character, who was *sanctified and ordained a Prophet unto the nations*, Jer. i. 5. And *Jeremiah* was put to death in *Ægypt*, and *Ezekiel* in *Babylon*, for appearing against the Idolatry of those Places.

During the Captivity, *Jehoiachin* was reconciled to the King of *Babylon*, and in great favour with him : *His throne was set above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon*, 2 King. xxv. 28. The *Jews* were in great Esteem, and in Places of great Honour and Trust ; and their Religion was *extolled* and recommended by Publick Edicts to all under that vast Empire. The Almighty Power of God was manifested by *Miracles*, and by the *Interpretation of Dreams and Prophecies* ; and his Majesty and Honour was acknowledged and proclaimed in the most publick and solemn manner, throughout all the *Babylonian* Empire, at the Command of Princes who were Idolaters, and were forced to it by the meer convictions of their own Consciences, wrought in them by the irresistible Power of God, *Dan. ii, iii, iv, v, vi.*

Daniel had acquainted *Cyrus* (as *Josephus* lays) with the Prophecy of *Isaiab*, in which

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he was so long before mention'd by Name : However, the Lord stirred up the Spirit of *Cyrus*, by this or some other means, to accomplish the Prophecy which he had made both by *Isaiab* and *Jeremiah*, concerning the Restoration of the *Jews*, after a Captivity of Seventy Years ; and *Cyrus* sent forth his Proclamation, declaring that he had received his Kingdom from God, with a charge to re-build the Temple at *Jerusalem*, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23. And this Decree of *Cyrus* was reinforced by *Darius* and *Artaxerxes*, *Ezra* vi, vii. Now so many several Decrees put forth in favour of the Religion of the *Jews*, and the miraculous Power and Wisdom which gave occasion to them, and the Advancement of *Daniel* and others, and the long life and continuance of *Daniel* in that Power and Esteem, must leave all the Eastern part of the World without any excuse, who were not converted to the Knowledge and Worship of the True God. The Advancement of *Esther* and *Mordecai* under *Ahasuerus*, and of *Nehemiah* under *Artaxerxes*, gave the *Jews* great Authority, and great opportunities of propagating their Religion from *India* even unto *Æthiopia*, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces ; for this was the extent of the Dominions of *Ahasuerus*, *Esth. i. 1.* and the *Jews* were dispersed in all the Provinces of the Kingdom of *Babylon*, chap. iii. 8. And they wanted no Care nor Diligence to improve every Opportunity ; as we learn from

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the Books of *Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah,* and *Esther*; and the very Names of such Persons is enough to convince us, that that part of the World could want no means of Conversion: *Confess him before the Gentiles, ye children of Israel; for he hath scattered us among them: there declare his greatness, and extoll him before all the living: for he is our Lord, and he is the God, our Father for ever. In the land of my captivity do I praise him, and declare his might and majesty to a sinful nation,* Tob. xiii. 3, 4, 6. This was the Practice of Pious Men among the Ten Tribes, of whom some were likewise in great Place and Authority, chap. i. 13, 21, 22.

And as the Ten Tribes were first carried away Captive; so, upon the Restoration of the Tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, all but a few, in comparison of the other Tribes, remained in the places of their Captivity; and many (c) of those Two Tribes also chose rather to continue in *Babylon*, than forsake the Possessions which they enjoyed there: It is supposed, that not much more than half of them returned; and there were afterwards three celebrated Universities (d) of the Jews in *Babylon, Nehardea, Pumbeditha,* and *Soria*, besides several other Places famous for Learning. The Jews relate, (e) that the Ten Tribes were carried away not only into *Media* and *Persia*, but into the Northern Countries beyond the *Bosphorus*; and *Ortelius* finds them

(c) *Joseph. Antiq. l. 11. c. 1. Mede's Discourse 2. p. 75.*
 (d) *Lightf. Harm. N.T. p. 335. Exercit. on Acts, p. 681, 799.*
 (e) *Hier. in Zech. x.*

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in *Tartary*. The *Odomantes*, a People of *Thrace*, were Circumcised; and the (f) Scholiast of *Aristophanes* says that they were reported to be Jews.

(f) *Aristophan. Acharnens. Act. 1. scen. 4.*

The Restoration of the Jews by *Cyrus*, who had been so long before appointed and named by God himself for that Work, was ordained for this end, that they might know, from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is no God besides him, Isa. xlv. 6. And it is observable, that after the Captivity, the Jews were never given to Idolatry; and tho' they were before too much addicted to it, yet this gave occasion to Prophecies and Miracles to withdraw them from it; and these, with the Judgments of God which befell them for their Iniquities, gave continual Manifestations to the World of the Truth of their Religion.

When the Ten Tribes were carried from *Samaria*, and strange Nations were transplanted thither in their room, God would not suffer his Name and Worship to be quite neglected and forgotten amongst them, but they were forced to send for a Priest back again, to teach them the fear of the Lord, 2 King. xvii.

And after the Taking of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the Death of *Gedaliah*, who was set over them that were left behind in the Land of *Judah*, all the People that were not before carried to *Babylon*, fled into *Egypt*, *Jeremiah* being forced along with them,

them, who there prophesied against *Ægypt*, and foretold its Destruction by the *Babylonians*, *Jer. xliii.* and at last suffer'd Martyrdom. Their going into *Ægypt*, was indeed contrary to the Word of the Lord by *Jeremiah*; but the Providence of God so order'd things, that *Jeremiah* should be carry'd thither with the rest, to testify against their Wickedness and Obstinacy, and to denounce God's Judgments upon them, and upon the *Ægyptians*, in whom they placed their confidence, rather than in the Living God, and then to die in testimony of the Truth of what he had delivered.

Cyrus and *Darius* desired the Prayers and Sacrifices of the *Jews*, in behalf of themselves and their Kingdoms. *Alexander the Great*, *Ptolemæus Philadelphus*, *Augustus*, *Tiberius*, and *Vitellius*, sent *Victims* to be sacrificed at the Temple of *Jerusalem*, (as we learn from *Philo* and *Josephus*.) The *Jews* constantly offer'd Sacrifices and Prayers for the Kings and Emperors under whom they lived, and for their Allies and Confederates, *1 Maccab. vii. 33. & xii. 11.* and it was expected of them: for the omission of this, contrary to their known and approved Custom in all former Times, was the thing which hastened their final Destruction by the *Romans*.

The course of *Alexander's* Victories was so unexpected, so sudden, and every way so wonderful, that it alarm'd the World: And

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no Man can believe that this was designed by Providence only to gratifie the Ambition and Vanity of a rash Youth, but to open a way for a Communication between the several Parts of the Earth, to the benefit of Mankind in the improvement of all useful Knowledge; and when this Work was done, he was no longer the same Man he had been before, but soon resigned his Conquests with his Life.

Alexander is said, by (g) *Josephus*, to have been mightily encouraged in his Enterprise against *Persia*, by the Prophecy of *Daniel*: He remitted the Tribute of every Seventh Year, in which, by their Law, they were obliged not to sow their Ground, (h) which was afterwards remitted to them likewise by the *Romans*: He granted the *Jews*, who in great numbers list'd themselves in his Army, the free Exercise of their Religion, and promised to grant the same to the *Jews* of *Babylon* and *Media*; and those of *Sanballat's* Faction, who followed him into *Ægypt*, he placed in *Thebais*.

Hecatæus, who lived in *Alexander's* time, wrote (i) a Book concerning the *Jews*, in which he took notice of their great Zeal for their Law; which he proves by this Instance, That when *Alexander* repaired the Temple of *Belus*, at *Babylon*, his Soldiers, who were *Jews*, could by no means be brought to help forward that Work; and at last

(g) *Josephus*.
Antiqu. l. 11.
c. ult.(h) *Ibid.*
l. 14. c. 17.(i) *Jos*
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last the King excused them. He related, that *Hezechias* the High-Priest of the *Jews*, a Venerable Man of about Sixty six Years of Age, of great Prudence and Experience, and withal very Floquent, whom he knew, and had conversed with, was one, amongst others, who followed *Ptolemæus Lagi*, after the Battle at *Gaza*; in which he overcame *Demetrius Poliorcetes*. He mention'd likewise, that *Mossollamus*, a *Jew*, marching with him; when the rest made a stand, by reason of a Bird, which the Augur said portended ill Luck to them, if they should march on, shot that Bird in the sight of them all, and defended what he had done by Argument. And indeed, the *Jews* wanted neither Zeal, nor Wit, nor Courage, upon every occasion, to appear in behalf of their own Religion, against the Superstitions and Idolatries of the *Heathen*. This Book of *Hecatæus* was extant in the time of *Josephus*, and he refers his Reader to it; and he appeals to the Letters of *Alexander the Great*, and of *Ptolemæus Lagi*, and the Kings of *Ægypt* his Successors, in favour of the *Jews*.

(k) *Joseph. Antiqu.*
l. 12. c.
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When *Ptolemæus Lagi* (k) took *Jerusalem*, he transplanted the *Jews* in great multitudes into *Ægypt*, putting many of them into his Garrisons, and allowing them equal Privileges with the *Macedonians*; by which Encouragement, many, besides those whom he transported, voluntarily went to dwell there.

there. And the Captives of that Nation, set at liberty by *Ptolemæus Philadelphus*, were above 110000. And besides the signal Favours and Honours bestowed upon the *Jews*, by *Ptolemæus Philadelphus* (who likewise caused the Holy Scriptures to be translated into the *Greek Tongue*, which was an exceeding great furtherance to the Propagation of Religion,) *Seleucus Nicanor* granted them the freedom of *Antioch*, and of the Cities which he had founded in *Asia*, and the *Lower Syria*; and these Privileges remained to them till *Josephus's* time, after all which the *Jews* had done to deserve to be deprived of them.

Antiochus the Great sent forth his Letters and Edicts, which are to be seen in (l) *Josephus*, in favour of the *Jews*, more especially in what related to their Religious Worship. And *Seleucus*, Son to this *Antiochus*, after his Father's Example, out of his own Revenues, bore the Cost belonging to the Sacrifices, 2 *Mac.* iii. 3. *Antiochus Epiphanes* himself at last, under the avenging Hand of God upon him for all his impious Cruelties, acknowledged himself punished for his Sacrilege and other Mischiefs committed at *Jerusalem*, 1 *Mac.* vi. 12, 13. & 2 *Mac.* ix. 17.

(l) *Joseph. Antiquit.*
l. 12. c. 3.

Antiochus Pius, when he besieged *Jerusalem*, (m) not only granted a Truce for Seven Days, during the *Feast of Tabernacles*, but

(m) *Ibid.*
l. 13. c. 16.

but sent rich and noble Presents for Sacrifices; and the City being delivered into his hands upon honourable Conditions, with regard particularly to Religion, *Hyrchanus* accompanied *Antiochus* in his *Parthian Expedition*; and the *Feast of Pentecost* falling the Day after the Sabbath, *Antiochus* stopt his Army those two Days, for the sake of the *Jews*.

(n) *1 Mac.* viii, xii, xiv. *2 Mac.* xi. *Joseph. Antiqu.* l. 13. c. 9, 13. l. 14. c. 16. *Justin.* lib. 36. c. 3. (o) *Joseph. contr. Ap.* l. 2. (p) *Joseph. Antiquit.* l. 14. c. 16. l. 16. c. 4. 5, 10. l. 19. c. 4, 6.

The *Lacedæmonians* claimed (n) Kindred with the *Jews*, and both They and the *Athenians* and *Romans* enter'd into Leagues with them, which from time to time were continued and renewed. *Josephus* mentions a Pillar then standing at *Alexandria*, containing the Privileges (o) granted to the *Jews* by *Julius Cæsar*. And when no other Religion was tolerated, except those established by the Laws of the Empire, the *Jews* only had Allowance for a free Exercise of their Religion even in *Rome* it self; and for this and many other Edicts and Decrees of the Senate in favour of the *Jews*, *Josephus* (p) appeals to the Tables of Brass then extant, and preserved in the Capitol, and other places in which they were engraven.

The Sufferings and Martyrdoms under the *Maccabees*, and the Resolution and Constancy which they shewed upon all occasions, in defence of their Religion, rendred the *Jews* renowned over all Nations: and besides,

besides, their Conquests were very considerable, and the Advantages which accrued to Religion by reason of them. In the time of *Hyrchanus*, (q) all *Idumæa* embraced the *Jewish* Religion. *Aristobulus* having conquered great part of *Ituræa*, caused all their Males (r) to be circumcised, and to observe the Law of *Moses*, as *Strabo* testifies. Under *Alexander* Father to *Hyrchanus*, (s) the *Jews* took twelve Cities from the *Arabians*, and became possessed of many Cities in *Syria*, *Idumæa*, and *Phenicia*, all which they brought over to the Profession of their own Religion, and demolished *Pella*, for refusing to embrace it.

The (t) Temple built by *Sanballat*, for *Manasses*, who had married his Daughter, was an occasion of the *Samaritans* leaving their False Gods. And after the building of the Temple in *Ægypt*, the *Babylonian Talmud* says (u) that the *Jews* there were double the number of those that came out from thence under *Moses*. The Zeal of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, though they were Hypocrites, did exceedingly conduce to the propagation of their Religion; for they compassed sea and land to make one *Profelyte*, and so far they were to be commended; but then they made him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves, *Mat. xxiii. 15.* yet still they taught the necessary Points of Doctrine, though in Hypocrisie, and with the mixtures

tures of Superstition ; and our Saviour commands his Disciples to *observe and do what they bid them, but not to do after their works.* And it was required of the Fathers

(x) *Lightf. Exercit. on 1 Cor. xiii. 1. p. 783.*

of the *Sanhedrin*, (x) that they should understand many Languages ; that the *Sanhedrin* might hear nothing by an Interpreter ; which qualified the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who aspired to that Dignity, to be the better able to make *Profelytes*.

The *Jews* were dispersed over all the World, but chiefly seated themselves in *Rome*, and *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*, the three chief Cities of the Empire ; in all which they had great and peculiar Privileges ; and in *Alexandria* they had Magistrates of their

(y) *Joseph. Antiquit. l. 14. c. 12.*

own, (y) and lived under a peculiar Government by themselves. Never any other Nation had such various Changes and Revolutions, to mix them with the rest of the World ; and never any People were so industrious and zealous, and so successful in the propagation of their Religion. They had their *Proseuchæ*, and their Synagogues for Divine Worship, and for Reading and Explaining the Scriptures ; which Men of all Religions were admitted to hear, in all places where-ever they dwelt ; and in *Ægypt* they

(z) *Joseph. Bell. Jud. l. 7. c. 30.*

had a (z) Temple like that at *Jerusalem*, built by *Onias*, which continued for the space of Three hundred and forty three Years, till the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus* ;
and

and in the Synagogues the Scriptures were read in the *Greek* Tongue, which was the most universal Language then in the World. Some have affirmed, that as much of the Scriptures as was written in *Solomon's* time, was then translated into the *Syriac* Tongue ; and there is little doubt (a) but that at least part of the Bible was translated into *Greek* before the time of *Alexander the Great* : but the Version of the *Septuagint* soon dispersed into all hands, which was made at the Command of *Ptolemæus Philadelphus* ; to whom likewise, and his Father, (b) *Aristobulus* dedicated an Exposition of the Law of *Moses*.

(a) *Clem. Alexand. Strom. l. 1. Euseb. Præpar. Evang. l. 13. c. 12.*

(b) *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 7. c. ult.*

By all these means, vast multitudes of *Profelytes* were made to the *Jewish* Religion in all Parts of the World. What numbers there were at *Rome* of this Religion, we know from the *Roman* Poets and Historians, and we have as good Evidence of the spreading of it in other Places. Not to repeat what has been already related, nor to mention particular Persons of the greatest Note and Eminency, nor particular Cities, as *Damascus*, (c) where it more remarkably prevailed, it is evident what numbers of Persons, in all Nations, professed this Religion, from the incredible Treasures which *Crassus* found in the Temple of *Jerusalem*, being Ten thousand Talents, amassed there by the Summs of Gold sent from all Places by the *Jews*, and such as
I became

(c) *Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. 2. c. 25.*

became *Profelytes* to their Religion: And for the Truth of this, *Josephus* cites *Strabo's* Authority, who says, (d) that the *Jews* were every where dispersed, and every where gained Men over to their Religion; and that in *Alexandria* they had their *Ethnarchæ*, or proper Magistrates, by whom they were governed. And another Proof of the multitudes of *Profelytes* made to the *Jewish* Religion, may be had from the great numbers assembled (e) at their *Passovers*, and at the *Feasts of Pentecost*, out of every Nation under Heaven.

(d) *Joseph. Antiq. l. 14. c. 12.*
(e) *Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. 7. c. 17. Act. ii. 5.*

(f) *Ibid. cap. 24. pag. 979.*

Thus mightily prevailed the Religion of the *Hebrews*, till their City and Temple, by a Divine Vengeance, as (f) *Josephus* often confesses, was destroyed; and the *Law* it self, with the Utensils of the Temple, was carried among the Spoil in *Titus's* Triumph. And when the *Jewish* Religion had its full Period and Accomplishment, the *Christian Religion*, which succeeded in the room of it, and was prefigured by it, soon spread it self into all corners of the Earth, and is at this day preached among all Nations.

But before I proceed to consider the Propagation of the *Christian Religion*, it may be requisite, (1.) To produce some Testimonies of the *Heathens*, concerning the *Jews* and their Religion. (2.) To shew, That there have been always remaining divers Memorials of the True Religion among the *Heathens*.

Heathens. (3.) To consider the Authority of the *Sibylline Oracles*.

I. As to the Testimony of *Heathen Authors*, it were no more an Objection against what has been alledged, though they had taken no notice of the History of the *Jews*, than it can be supposed to be an Objection against the Truth of the Taking of *Troy*, or the Building of *Rome*, that the *Scriptures* make no mention of either of them. The *Greek Historians* were so ignorant of Foreign Affairs, as (g) *Josephus* has observed, that *Ephorus*, one of the best of them, thought *Spain* to be but one City: and neither *Herodotus* nor *Thucydides*, nor any Historian of their Times, made any mention of the *Romans*. The *Roman Authors* are but of a very late date, in comparison: and the *Greeks*, besides their ignorance in Antiquity, and in the Affairs of other Nations, are known to have been a vain People, who despised all besides themselves, accounting them *Barbarians*, and taking little notice of *Rome* it self, before they fell under its Power.

Yet many of the *Heathen Writers*, as *Josephus* shews, have made famous mention of the *Jews*; though others have given a wrong and malicious Account of them, whom he proves to contradict one another, and sometimes themselves. Some, again, have omitted the mention of the *Jews*, though they had never so much occasion for it; of which he

(g) *Josephi contr. Ap. l. 1.*

gives a remarkable Instance in one *Hieronimus*, who though he were Governor of *Syria*, and wrote a Book of the *Successors of Alexander*, and lived at the same time with *Hecatæus*, yet never vouchsafed to speak of the *Jews*, of whom *Hecatæus* wrote a particular Book: But the Works of him, and of many other *Greek* Authors, are now lost, which were written concerning the *Jews*, the Fragments whereof are still to be seen in *Josephus*, *Clem. Alexandrinus*, *Eusebius*, and others. Of those whose Works remain, *Herodotus*, relating the Victory of *Pharaoh Necho*, in the Battel at *Megiddo*, calls *Jerusalem*, *Cadytis*; by a small variation, as (b) *Dr. Lightfoot* has observed, for *Kedoshai*, that is, the *Holy City*, the usual denomination of that City. *Strabo* mentions *Moses* and the ancient *Jews* with commendation. *Diodorus Siculus* names *Moses* amongst the chief Law-givers of ancient Times. *Pliny* says, *Jerusalem* was the most famous City, not only of *Judæa*, but of the whole *East*. *Tacitus* himself gives this testimony of the *Jews*, That they worshipped the Supreme, Eternal, Immutable Being. But above all, *Varro*, (i) the learnedest of the *Romans*, much approved their way of Worship, as being free from that Idolatry which he could not but dislike in the *Heathen* Religion. And it is generally agreed by all, that the Religion of the *Jews* was received all over the World; and, as *Seneca* (k) express'd it, *Victi victoribus leges dederunt*.

(b) *Lightfoot* on *St. Mark* c. 3. s. 6. *Strab.* l. 16.

Diodor. Sic. l. 1. *Plin. Nat. Hist.* l. 5. c. 14. *Tacit. Hist.* l. 15.

(i) *S. Aug. Civit. Dei*, l. 4. c. 31.

(k) *Ibid.* l. 5. c. 11.

II. There have been always remaining divers Memorials and Remembrances of the True Religion amongst the *Heathen*. The Flood of *Noah* and the Ark (l) were generally taken notice of by *Heathen* Historians; and the Flood of *Deucalion* was (m) plainly transcribed from that of *Noah*. *Jove* is a plain depravation of the word *Jehovah*; and *Diodorus Siculus* said (n) that *Moses* received his Laws from the God *Ἰαῶ*, which is another variation from it. And this proves the Antiquity of the *Heathen* Tradition concerning the True God; since the *Jews* of latter times would not speak the name themselves, much less communicate it to others. *Apollo Clarius* being consulted to know who the God *Jao* was; answered, That he is the Supreme God of all, (as *Macrobius* (o) informs us, from *Cornelius Labeo*;) which both shews, that the *Heathen* had knowledge of the God *Jehovah*, and that the *Oracles* themselves were sometimes forced to confess Him to be the Supreme God, though obicurely, and under some disguise, to amuse those to whom their Answers were returned; as here *Apollo* would have him believed to be *Bacchus*. The *Tetragrammaton*, or *Jehovah*, is likewise supposed to be meant by the *Tetractys* of *Pythagoras*; and *Ἐλελεῦ*, a word used in Songs and Acclamations, has a plain allusion to *Alleluia*, especially with the addition of *is*, as *Ἐλελεῦ is*.

(l) *Joseph. Antiquit.* l. 1. c. 3.

(m) *Lucian. de Dea Syr.*

(n) *Diod. Sic.* l. 1.

(o) *Macrobius Saturn.* l. 1. c. 18.

(p) *Seld. de Jur. Nat. & Gent. l. 3. c. 15.* From a learned and large Account of Mr. Selden's (p) upon this Subject, it appears, that there was a general Observation amongst the *Heathen*, of one Day in Seven; though length of Time and corruption of Manners had greatly obscured or quite blotted out the remembrance of the Original Institution; or Superstition had by degrees assigned other Reasons for it: and this is sufficient to reconcile *Josephus* and other Authors with what he brings, which seems to imply the contrary. It has been proved by several, and is generally agreed by learned Men, that many of the Rites among the *Aegyptians* and other Nations were the same with those appointed by the Law of *Moses*, or very like them. But some would have it, that *Moses* took these Rites from those Nations, without any Proof, or possibility of Proof, that I can perceive. For how should it be proved, when we have no Writings or Memorials of these Nations so ancient as those of *Moses* by many Ages? And we read in the Scriptures, that several Laws were enjoind the *Jews*, because they were contrary to the Idolatrous Practices of the *Heathen*, but never find the least intimation that any were given them in imitation of the *Gentile* Worship: and it is unreasonable to imagine that they should have Laws appointed in contradiction to the Idolatrous Worshipers, and others at the same time in compliance with them, when they were by a miraculous

culous Providence separated and distinguished from the Idolatrous Nations, and kept forty Years in the Wilderness, to hinder them from all communication with them, and to cure them of the proneness which they had to imitate them. If it be supposed, that the *Jews*, who were hated and despised by other Nations, would be very unlikely to be imitated by them: it may be observed, that they were not always thus despised, nor among all Nations, but they were better esteemed till the latter Ages of their Government; and then the reason of their being ill thought of, was, because they were singular in the principal Points of Worship, and resolute and zealous in the observation of it, and would make no compliances with the *Heathen* World; for they preserved themselves free from all Idolatry after their Captivity in *Babylon*. But however hated and contemned they might be; yet the same Authors who acquaint us with it, express their own sense, rather than the sense of the rest of Mankind: for at the same time they tell us, that they gained every where Profelytes. The *Greeks* were likewise ever despised by the *Romans*, but ever imitated; and we have now an Example of a neighbour Nation, which is generally both imitated and spoken against. And there can be no other reasonable account given of the Agreement of so many other Nations with the *Jews*, in their Rites and Customs,

Customs, but that these Nations, in the times of *Solomon*, or some time after, during the flourishing estate of the Kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel*, or perhaps after the Captivity, and since the Dispersion of the *Hebrews*, had conformed themselves to them.

A Tradition, of the manner of the Passage of the *Israelites* through the *Red Sea*, was retained among the People of *Heliopolis*, related by (q) *Artapanus*. Miracles were sometimes wrought among the *Heathen*, by the invocation of the God (r) of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*; and these and other Hebrew Names, as *Zebaoth*, and *Adonai*, were commonly used by the *Gentiles*, in their Incantations and Exorcisms, which they retained by Tradition, though they knew not the meaning nor original of them. Those who first travell'd into *China*, (s) found *Hebrews* there, who called themselves *Israelites*, but knew not the Name of *Jews*; they were dispersed in divers Provinces, and read the *Pentateuch* in the Hebrew Tongue, in their Synagogues, without Points. The observation of *New Moons*, *Years of Jubilee*, and *Circumcision*, was found among the *Americans*, and an infinite number of Ceremonies and Customs (says (t) *Acosta*) which resembled the ancient Law of *Moses*. They had likewise (u) a Tradition of *Noah's Flood*. *Hornius* acknowledgeth (w) that the Name of *Joseph* was in use among the *Americans*, and that they frequently mention'd the word *Alleluia*

(q) Apud Euseb. Praepar. l. 9. c. 27.

(r) Orig. contra Cels. l. 1. & 4. Vid. Grut. ad Matth. xii. 27.

(s) Trigaut. de Christ. Ex. ed. a. p. d. Sinas, l. 1. c. 11.

(t) of A. costa Hist. l. 5. c. 27. & l. 5. c. 2.

(u) Ler. Hist. Navig. in Bras. c. 16.

Pet. Mart. Dec. 6. c. 4.

(w) Horn. de Orig. Americ. Praef. & l. 2. c. 10. & l. 4. c. 15.

Alleluia in their Songs, and used Circumcision; and he shews, that in their several Languages they have many words from the Phœnician or Hebrew Tongue. The People of *Bengala* retained the Name of *Adam*; and in *Madagascar* they (x) had the Names of *Adam*, *Eve*, and *Noah*. So that there is no Nation but has still had some Memorials of Revealed Religion. And it has been shewn by *Clem. Alexandrinus*, by *Eusebius* and *Theodoret*, and by Modern Authors, that the Philosophers had generally some knowledge of the Religion of the *Hebrews*, (as it was particularly affirmed by *Numenius* the Pythagorean,) that the *Brachmans* also of *India* were not unacquainted with it, and that the Laws of the wisest *Heathen* Nations were taken from the Laws of *Moses*.

III. The Oracles ascribed to the *Sibyls* are so plain and so particular, that if they should be admitted for genuine, not only the Revelations made to the *Jews*, but all the Mysteries of the *Christian* Religion must be fully discovered to the *Heathen*; but their Plainness has been the cause why their Authority has been much question'd; which yet ought not wholly to be rejected, since the Sibylline Oracles were preserved in the Capitol, till the Reign of *Honorius*, when they were burnt by *Stilico*: and it is not to be imagined, that *Justin Martyr*, and other *Christians*, would cite Oracles which were in the possession of those

(x) Voyage de Jean Serris, Tom. I.

those against whom they cited them, unless they had been able to make good their Authority. This is a Subject which has exercised the Pens of many learned Men. I shall here set down what appears to me most probable upon the Question, as briefly as I can.

1. It is evident from *Virgil*, that in the Verses of the *Sibyl* of *Cuma*, the Birth of some Great Person was foretold; and from *Tully*, that this Person was to be a *King*: though both in *Tully* and *Virgil* the Prophecy be misapplied to a wrong Person. The Fourth Eclogue of *Virgil* contains the sense of the *Sibyl*; and however it were design'd by him, is in most things much more applicable to our *Saviour*, than to the Person whom he describes.

In *Catiline's* Conspiracy, *Lentulus* flatter'd himself with the hopes of being a King, from (y) the Sibylline Oracles. And from the same Oracles, as well as from the Scriptures, it is probable the expectation of a King, who should arise out of *Judæa*, which both *Suetonius* and *Tacitus* mention, (z) was spread throughout the *East*.

What *Tully* says, [*lib. 2. de Divin.*] in disparagement of this Oracle, is not much considerable in the case; because that whole Book is written with a design to disparage all Divination in general: For being an Academic, as he professes throughout his

(y) *Tull. in Catilin. Orat. 3. Sallust. Bel. Catilin.*

(z) *Tacit. Hist. l. 5. Sueton. in Vespas. c. 4.*

Books

Books of Philosophy, he acknowledged no more of any part of their Religion, than was just necessary to comply with the Laws, as he owns himself in divers places. However, from him it appears that a Sibylline Oracle was alledged to the purpose there mentioned; and that being in favour of *Cæsar*, and of Monarchy, if there had been no other, was cause enough for *Tully* to reject it, and turn it to ridicule.

2. Though the Verses of the *Sibyl* of *Cuma* were burnt with the Capitol, *A. U. C. DCLXXI.* yet *Virgil* expressly naming *Cuma*, this *Sibyl's* Verses must be still remaining, or supposed to be so; unless what he writes, became some way or other known before the burning of the Capitol, and was delivered afterwards down by Tradition. *Tully* quotes *Sibylla Erythræa*, [*lib. 1. de Divin.*] and if he mean the same *Sibyl* in the 2d. Book, *Martianus Capella* says, (a) that *Sibylla Erythræa* and *Cumana* were the same. And in the search which was made for the Sibylline Oracles in *Italy*, and in all other places where there was any probability of finding any remains of them, after the burning of the Capitol, it is likely her Verses might be recovered. For (b) *Valerius Maximus* says, that *M. Tullius* (as he calls him, not *Attilius*) was put to death by *Tarquinius*, for suffering *Petronius Sabinus* to transcribe the *Sibyl's* Verses; and whether they were dispersed in

(a) *Martian. Capell. Nupt. Philolog. l. 2.*

(b) *Valer. Maximus, l. 1. c. 1.*

in divers Copies before it was discovered, so as not to be suppress'd, it is not known: But if they were the Verses of some other Sibyl, which went under the Name of the Sibyl of *Cuma*, after her's were burnt with the Capitol, it is not much material; however, the *Romans* certainly thought they had the Oracles of the *Cuman* Sibyl: for, as

(c) *Lactantius*
de Falſâ
Relig. c. 5.

Lactantius says, (c) they allowed the Verses of all the other Sibyls to be copied out and published, though they would not suffer those of *Cuma* to be read, but by Order of the Senate.

Notwithstanding all this care, they could not keep them concealed; for we meet them often quoted. Indeed, the Oracles in the Capitol (d) were only Copies taken from Originals which were left in those places, from whence the *Romans* had their own Copies transcribed; and the Originals might be read, and other Copies taken, how carefully soever the *Romans* kept their own.

(d) *Dionysius*
Halicar.
L 4

3. It being known that the Sibylline Oracles contained things which concerned the Kingdom of the *Messias*, and the Verses themselves being in divers hands, this gave occasion to some to make many more Verses, under the name of the *Sibyls*, relating the whole History of our Saviour, &c. But if the Sibyls Verses had been all burnt or lost, or if they had been kept so close, that

no

no body could possibly come to the knowledge of them, without leave from the Senate, there could have been no pretence for any Imposture, nor would the Christians ever have alledged them as genuine. *Celsus* objects only, (e) That many things were added to the Verses of the Sibyls: Not that they were all Counterfeit, or that the Christians had no means of coming by the True: which was an Advantage that an Adversary much less subtle than *Celsus* would not have omitted, if there had been any ground for it. *Origen* replies, That it was a malicious Accusation, and that he was able to bring no Proof of it, by producing ancient Copies more genuine than those which the Christians made use of.

(e) *Origen.*
contra Cels.
l. 7.

And if the Sibyls had delivered nothing relating to these Matters, why should any one counterfeit Verses in their Name, rather than under the Title of any other Oracle? There must be some ground and foundation of Truth, to give any opportunity or pretence to the Counterfeiting of it: And the Prophecies of the Sibyls concerning *Christ*, must be the occasion of all the additional ones which were falsely ascribed to them.

4. *Isaac Vossius* thought that great part of these Oracles were composed by the *Jews*. And indeed, *Pausanias* says (f) one of the Sibyls was by the *Jews* called *Sabba*; the

(f) *Pausanias*
in Phocicis
p. 328.

the same, I suppose, who is mention'd by
 * *Ælian*; and by *Suidas*, said to be descended
 from *Noah*, and named *Sambethe*, call'd the
Chaldæan, and by some the *Hebrew*, and also
 the *Persian Sibyl*; whom † *Alexander ab A-*
lexandro calls *Sibylla Judæa*.

† *Alexand.*
ab Alex.
 l.3.c.16.

But if these were only Heathen Oracles, yet there is reason to believe that the Predictions concerning *Christ* were very plain, though not so particular as those now set down in the Sibylline Books; both because the *Heathen* having but few Oracles of this nature, and so many of a quite contrary Nature, it was the more necessary that these should be plain; and because we find, that when God, in his infinite Wisdom, saw it fitting to reveal himself to others, he did it in as plain a manner, and sometimes in a plainer, than he did to his own People in any one Prophecy.

Thus *Balaam's* Prophecy is as plain as any Prophecy of that time at least; and our Saviour discovered himself more plainly to the Woman of *Samaria*, than he had yet done to any of his Disciples, *John* iv. 26. Not to mention the Dreams of *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, or the Message of *Jonah* to the *Ninevites*. And as *Balaam*, an Inchanter, or Sorcerer, delivered a true and famous Prophecy of *Christ*, and the Devils were forced to confess him to be the *Son of God*; so it is reasonable to believe, that God might

might ordain, that these celebrated Prophe-
 tesses, whose Oracles were otherwise the
 Devils Instruments to promote his Ends,
 should foretell our *Saviour's* Coming: And
 yet *St. Augustine* assures us, (g) that the (g) *August.*
Sibylla Erythræa, or *Cumana*, had nothing of *Civ. Dei,*
 Idolatry in her Verses; but spoke so much *l.18.c.23.*
 against it, that he believed her to belong to
 the *City of God*.

5. The difference which there is between
Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue*, and the Translation
 of it into *Greek*, in *Constantine's* Oration, is
 rather an argument for the Authority of the
 Sibylline Oracles, than against it. For *Con-*
stantine was wont to compose his *Orations*
 and *Epistles* in *Latin*, and they were tran-
 slated into *Greek* by some whom he em-
 ployed in that service: And the Author of
 the Translation, translated only what was
 properly *Virgil's*; but when he came to
 what was by *Virgil* borrowed from the *Sibyl*,
 he wrote down the Original *Greek*, not tran-
 slating the variations which *Virgil* had made
 from it, to apply the Prophecy to his own
 Subject.

It is well known that the Ancients took
 as great a liberty as this, in their Transla-
 tions; and it was the more allowable, when
 there could be no Design or likelihood of
 Deceit in the Translation of so famous a
 Poem as that *Eclogue* of *Virgil*. This was
 but to point out the Alterations which
Virgil

Virgil had made, and to shew how easily these parts of his Poem might be supplied from the Original Greek: And perhaps this was a known Translation of that *Eclogue* which had been made with this design.

It were no difficult matter to Answer all the other Objections which are wont to be brought against the *Sibylline Oracles*, so far as the Notion here proposed is concerned in them. For though the Books which we have now, contain manifest Falsifications and Forgeries; yet there must have been something real, to give a pretence and countenance to so many elaborate Forgeries of this nature, and that was the *Sibylline Oracles* mention'd in *Tully*, *Sallust*, *Virgil*, &c. We may therefore conclude, that the True Religion received a considerable Promulgation from these Oracles, which served to awaken in the *Gentiles* an Expectation of a *King* to be born in *Judæa*.

As soon as the Gospel appeared in the World, like the Rising Sun, it defused its Divine Light and Influence into all Parts of the Earth; its Propagation was it self a Miracle, and answerable to that miraculous Power of Languages, and other means by which it was accomplished. *Tertullian* acquaints us, (b) that it was soon propagated beyond the Bounds of the *Roman Empire*;

(b) *Tertul. adv. Ju- daeos*, c. 7.

pire; he speaks of the Northern Parts of *Britain*: and we know it received as early a Propagation in other Places more remote, being preached by *St. Bartholomew* (i) to the *Indians*, by *St. Thomas* to the *Parthians*, and to the *Scythians* by *St. Andrew*.

(i) *Euseb. Hist.* l. 3. c. 1. & l. 5. c. 10.

In *St. Augustine's* time (k) the *Christians* were more numerous in all the known Parts of the World, than the *Jews* and *Heathens* together: And we have reason to believe, that the Zeal of the Apostles, and their immediate Disciples and Followers, had carried the glad Tidings of the Gospel farther than either Ambition or Avarice it self; till of late years, had made any Discovery; which *Tertullian* likewise sufficiently intimates.

(k) *St. Aug. de Utilit. Credendi*, c. 7.

The *Cross* was found to be in use among the *Chineses*, by those who first went from *Europe* (l) into *China*; and a *Bell* was seen there, which had Greek Characters engraven on it: And those who honour'd the *Cross* were in so great numbers in the Northern Provinces, that they gave Jealousie to the *Infidels*. The *Christians* there were call'd *Isai*, from the Name *Jesus*: And from the *Chaldee Books* which were found upon the Coasts of *Malabar*, it appears that *St. Thomas* preach'd the Gospel in *China*, and founded many Churches there. The Passages which prove this, may be seen in *Trigautius* and *Semedo*, translated out of those Books.

(l) *Trigaut. de Christ. Exped. apud Sinas*, l. 1. c. 11. *Alvar. Semedo Hist. of China*, part 1. c. 31.

(m) *Purch. part 1. l. 4. c. 16.* *Nicolas de Conti* (m) faith of the *Chinese*, that when they rise in the Morning, they turn their Faces to the *East*, and with their Hands joined, say, *God in Trinity keep us in this Law.*

(n) *Le Compté's Memoirs, p. 348. Semedo, ib.* The Gospel was preach'd in *China* (n) by some who came from *Judæa*, and seem to have been Monks, *A. D. DCXXXVI*, as it appears by a Marble Table erected *A. D. DCCLXXXII*, and found *A. D. MDCXXV*. This Monument contains the principal Articles of the Christian Faith: the substance of the Inscription may be seen in *Le Compté's Memoirs*, and the whole is translated by *Semedo*. *Hornius*

(o) *Horn. de Orig. American. l. 4. c. 15.* (o) indeed rejects this Inscription; which was likewise produced by *Kircher*, as counterfeit; but without any cause, that I can perceive: For if it were a fraud, there is no reason to think that we should not find all the Points of Popery inserted in it.

(p) *Hieron. Osor. de Rebus E-man. Lusitan. Regis, l. 2.* *Osorius* writes, (p) that the *Brachmans* believed a *Trinity* in the Divine Nature, and a God Incarnate to procure the Salvation of Mankind; and that the Church of *St. Thomas* was esteemed most Holy among the *Saracens*, and other Nations, for the report of *Miracles* wrought there.

(q) *Continuat. of the History of M. Bernier, Tom. 4.* The *Gentiles* of *Indostan* (q) retain some Notion of the *Trinity*, and of the *Incarnation* of the *Second Person*, though corrupted with fabulous Stories.

The

The People of *Ceylon* (r) do firmly believe the *Resurrection of the Body*. (r) *Capt. Knox his Hist. of Ceylon, part 3. c. 5.*

The *Indians* in *America* (s) worshipped a God, who, they said, was *One in Three and Three in One*. They Baptized (t) their Children, and used the Cross in Baptism, having a great veneration for the Cross, and thinking it a preservative against Evil Spirits: they believed the (u) Resurrection of the Body; they had Monasteries, Nunneries, Confessors and Sacraments: And the *Mexicans*, (x) in their ancient Tongue, called their High-Priests *Papae's*, or Sovereign Bishops, as it appears by their Histories. (s) *Jof. Acoft. Hist. l. 5. c. 28.* (t) *Pet. Mart. Decad. 4. c. 8. & Decad. 8. c. 9.* (u) *Lerius Navigat. in Bras. c. 15.* (x) *Acoft. l. 5. c. 14, 23, 24, 25.*

It is a remarkable Relation which *Lerius* gives (y) of the People of *Brasil*, That when he had discoursed to them concerning Religion, and endeavoured to persuade them to become Christians; one of their ancient Men answer'd, That he had declared excellent and wonderful things to them, which put him in mind of what they had often heard from their Fore-fathers, That a long while ago, many Ages before their time, their came a Stranger into their Countrey, in such an Habit, and with a Beard, as they saw the *French* wear, (for these *Americans* wear none) who preached to them in the same manner, and to the same effect, as they had now heard him do; but that the People would not hearken to him. Upon which *Lerius* observes, that *Nicephorus* writes, That

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St. Mat-

St. *Matthew* preached the Gospel to *Cannibals*; and he thinks it not improbable that some of the Apostles might pass into *America*, that the Sound of the Gospel might go into all the earth. And it is observable, that he found many words in the *Brasilian* Language taken out of the *Greek* Tongue.

(2) *Horn.*
de Orig. A-
meric. l. 3.
c. 2. &c.
l. 4. c. 15.

Hornius (2) owns, as every Man else must do that considers it, that there are manifest Tokens of the Rites and Doctrines both of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Religion among the *Americans*, as of *Circumcision*, *Baptism*, the *Trinity*, the *Lord's Supper*, &c. but then he is for bringing the *Jews* and *Christians* thither his own way, and will have the *Jews* come in company of the *Scythians*; and the *Christian* Rites to be brought in with the *Turks* and *Tartars*, or from *Japan* and *China*: Though he likewise approves and confirms the Relation which *Powel* and *Hackluyt* give of a Colony transplanted into *America*, by *Madoc*, from *Wales*.

Several Usages which are observed to be among the Natives, by the Missionaries, both in the *East* and *West-Indies*, and to have a near resemblance to their own Rites, seem to prove that there have formerly been *Christian* Monks amongst them; rather than that this proceeds (as the Missionaries imagined) from an ambition that the Devil has to Ape, as they say, what is done in God's Service; or that we may conclude,

conclude, as some *Protestants* have done a little too hastily, that this it self is a sufficient Argument that the Devil is the Author of such Rites, because they are found amongst his Worshippers. If we consider the vast numbers of Monks, in ancient Times, in the Eastern Parts of the World, who were Men of an active and indefatigable Zeal, it may well be supposed that some of them might find the way into those Countreys which have been but lately discovered to the rest of the World.

It is evident from the unanimous Testimony both of *Protestants* and *Papists*, that there are manifest Tokens, in all Parts of the World, that the *Christian* Religion has been preached amongst them. And it must, in common Justice, be confessed, that the latter Missionaries have preached the Gospel among the *Indians* with great zeal and success. A King of *Ceylon* (a) received *Baptism*, and was very zealous to bring over his Subjects to the *Christian* Faith; and one of their most learned Men became a *Christian* at the same time; but the King was deposed by his *Idolatrous* Subjects. Some of the Kings of *Congo* (b) have been converted. The King of *Monomotapa* (c), reigning *A. D.* *MDCXXXI*, was a *Christian*. And in *Japan* (d), *A. D.* *MDCXIII*, there were Four hundred thousand *Christians*, who were all destroyed (e) by the *Persecution*

(a) *Tavern.*
Voyage des In-
des, l. 3.
c. 4.

(b) *Varen.*
de diversis
Gent. Relig.

id. Voyage
de Perse,
c. 14. &c.

Ofor. de re-
bus Eman-
l. 3, 8, 10.

(c) *Tavern.*
ibid.

(d) *Ibid.*

(e) *Varen.*
de Relig. in
Regno Ja-
pon. c. 11.

raised, through the Covetousness of some *Dutch* Merchants, and their malicious Plots and Contrivances, to engross the Trade of those Islands to themselves. And indeed, by the Accounts which we have of those Parts, the Lives of the *Europæans* have been so scandalous, and so contrary to their Religion, that besides the guilt of the sins themselves, they have a great deal to answer, for that hindrance which they have thereby given to the progress of Christianity among those poor People, who have generally shewn a good inclination and forwardness to be instructed; and in times of Persecution, both from *Mahometans* and *Idolaters*, even Children have born all sorts of Torments (f) with wonderful Courage and Patience.

(f) *Varen. ibid.*

(g) *Varen. de Japon. c. 6. Semed. Hist. of China, part 2. Bell. Tartar. Le Compte, p. 480.*

Several Kings of *Japan* (g) have been converted: And in *China*, many of their principal *Mandarines*, or Governors, have been eminent for their zeal in the Christian Religion; and though the *Chineses* are naturally very timorous and cowardly, yet in all times of Persecution, they have been observed to continue firm and stedfast in the Faith. We are told, that the Mother, the Wife, and the Eldest Son of the Emperor of *China*, were formerly converted, and that there is lately an Edict publish'd in favour of the Christian Religion in *China*; that a Prince of the Blood is become

come

come a Christian; and that the Emperor himself has caused a Church to be erected in his Palace, and lodges the Missionaries near his own Person. And in the *West-Indies*, *Cortes* wrote to the Emperor, That the People of *Mechoacan* (h) sent to him for an Account of his Religion, being weary of their own, for its cruel and bloody Rites.

(h) *Jos. A. cost. l. 5. c. 22.*

It is observable, That *Christianity* has been still professed in those Parts of the World where there has been most Learning and Commerce; where they have been most able, and have had most opportunities to instruct other Nations. To which end, the vast extent first of the *Greek*, and *Latin*, and *Syriac*, and since of the *Sclavonian* and *Arabick* Tongues, has been very advantageous; the Scriptures of the New Testament being written in the first, and translated into all the rest. And though, by the Just and Wise Providence of God, *Mahometans* and *Idolaters* have been suffered to possess themselves of those Places, in *Greece*, *Asia* and *Africa*, where the *Christian Religion* formerly most flourished; yet there are still such remainders of the *Christian Religion* amongst them, as to give them opportunity to be converted; and when their sins shall not hinder, to restore the Gospel to those Countries, as before. For, by Mr. *Brerewood's* Account, (i) in the Do-

(i) *Brerewood's Enquir. c. 10.*

(k) Ricaut's Hist. of the Ottoman Emp. l. 2. c. 11, § 2.

(l) Doctor Prideaux's Life of Mahomet.

minions of the *Turk*, in *Europe*, the *Christians* make two third parts at least of the Inhabitants; and in *Constantinople* it self, he reckons above Twenty *Christian Churches*, and above Thirty in *Thessalonica*, where the *Mahometans* have (or had) but Three Mosques. Which, by (k) Sir Paul Ricaut's Account of the present state of the *Ottoman Empire* has not been without very considerable effect: For a Sect among the *Turks*, called *Haietti*, hold that *Christ* is Eternal, that he was Incarnate, and that he shall come to Judge the World at the Last Day. The Students in the *Grand Signior's* Court generally maintain, that *Christ* is God, and the Redeemer of the World; and this is a common Tenet in *Constantinople*; the Professors of it are styled *Chupmessabi*, or the Good Followers of the Messiah, and some have suffered Martyrdom in maintenance of this Doctrine. And the Turkish Soldiers, in the Confines of *Hungary* and *Bosnia*, read the Gospel in the *Sclavonian* Tongue. It is also observed lately, by (l) a learned Author, that the *Christians* had better Terms from *Mahomet* himself, than any other of his Tributaries; and that there is no *Mahometan* Countrey where the *Christian Religion* is not esteemed the best, next their own; and the Professors of it accordingly respected by them, before any other sort of Men that differ from them.

In

In *Africa*, besides the *Christians* living in *Ægypt*, and in the Kingdom of *Congo* and *Angola*, the Islands upon the Western Coasts are inhabited by *Christians*; and the vast Kingdom of *Habassia*, or *Abassinia*, supposed to be as big as *Germany*, *France*, *Spain* and *Italy* taken together, (according to Mr. *Brerewood's* computation) is possess'd by *Christians*. And till less than Two hundred Years ago, *Nabia*, a Countrey of a great extent, lying between the *Æquator* and the *Northern Tropick*, continued, as it's believed, from the Apostles times, in the *Christian Religion*. In *Asia*, he says, most part of the Empire of *Russia*, the Countries of *Circassia* and *Mengrelia*, *Georgia* and *Mount Libanus*, are inhabited only by *Christians*, besides the dispersion of them into other Parts, under the denomination of *Nestorians*, *Jacobites*, *Maronites*, and *Armenians*, the last of which are a People exceedingly addicted to Traffick (m), and have great Privileges granted them by the *Turks*, and other *Mahometans*; they are found in multitudes in most Cities of great Trade, and are more dispersed than any other Nation but the *Jews*; and the *Jacobites* are reported to be dispersed into Forty Kingdoms. In the Promontory extending it self into the *Indian Sea*, are the *Christians of Saint Thomas*; so called, because first converted by him, who is believed to lie buried at *Maliapour*, and they have continued in the *Christian Religion* from his time. It must be confess'd, that

(m) Brerewood's Enquir. c. 24.

that in *Mengrelia*, and other Countries, the Doctrines of Religion are much corrupted, and their Practice very different from the Profession of Christians; but however, they retain the Gospel among them, and it is every Man's own fault, if he make not a good use of those Means of Salvation which God in his Providence has afforded him. Of late, the *New Testament* in the *Malayan* Tongue, and *Grotius* his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion* in *Arabick*, have been translated and printed, at the Charge of the Honourable *Mr. Boyle*; and the first dispersed over all the *East-Indies*, where the *Malayan* Language is used; and the latter, into all the Countries where *Arabick* is spoken. He also contributed to the Impression of the *New Testament*, which was made by the *Turkish Company*, in the Language of the *Turks*. In *America*, it is notorious, that the Christians are sufficiently numerous, and have sufficient opportunities to instruct the Natives, if they were but as careful to improve them to so good an end, rather than in pursuit of their own Gain.

The summ of all is this. Before the *Flood*, *Revelations* were so frequent, and the Lives of Men so long, that no Man could be ignorant of the Creation, and of the Providence of God in the Government of the World, and the Duties required towards him. And in the first Ages after the Flood, God's Will revealed

revealed to *Noah*, and the Precepts given to him at his coming out of the Ark, must be well known to all the surviving World; and as soon as the remembrance of them began to decay, and Men to fall into Idolatry, *Abraham* and the other Patriarchs were sent into divers Countries, to proclaim God's Commandments, and to testify against the Impiety of Idolaters, where-ever they came. For, to publish the Revealed Will of God, and make it generally known in the World, God was pleased to chuse to himself a peculiar People, and to send them first out of *Mesopotamia* into *Canaan*, and, upon occasion, back again into *Mesopotamia*; and then several times into *Ægypt*; and from thence, after they had dwelt there some hundreds of Years, into *Canaan* again; at what time he appointed them Laws, admirably fitted and contrived for the receiving of *Strangers* and *Profelytes*. After many signal Victories, and after other Captivities, they were carry'd away Captive to *Babylon*, and were still delivered and restored by a wonderful and miraculous Providence, and had vast numbers of *Profelytes* in all Parts of the known World, and many footsteps and remainders of the True Religion are found in the remotest Parts of the Earth. And when, by the just Judgment of God upon the *Jews*, for their sin, in rejecting the *Messias*, they were rejected by Him, from being his People, they were dispersed throughout the World, for
a Testi-

a Testimony to all Nations, that *Moses* and the Prophets delivered no other thing than what God had revealed to them; since they continue to maintain and assert those very Books which plainly foretell all that Ruine and Destruction that has befallen them for their Infidelity and Disobedience. They are a standing Evidence, in all Parts of the World, of the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, bearing that Curse which their Fore-fathers so many Ages imprecated upon themselves and their Posterity, when they caused *Christ* to be crucified. And the Gospel has, by its own Power and Evidence, manifested it self to all People dispersed over the face of the whole Earth. To which might be added, That the *Mahometans* owning so much of the Religion revealed both in the Old and New Testament, afford some kind of Testimony to the Truth of it, in those vast Dominions of which they are possessed. All the most remarkable Dispensations of Providence, in the several Changes in the World, have had a particular influence in the propagation of the True Religion. *Cyrus*, *Alexander the Great*, divers of the *Roman Emperors*, and of latter Times, *Tamerlain*, and several other Princes, were great *Favourers* of it; and the worst of Men, and the most unlikely Accidents, have contributed towards the promotion of it.

If it be Objected, *That notwithstanding all which has been said, great part of the World*

World are Unbelievers. Let it be considered,

1. That there is no Nation but has great Opportunities of being Converted; and it is evident, from what has been produced concerning the *Chinese* and the *Americans* themselves, that the *Christian Religion* had been preached among them, though the knowledge of it was lost, through their own fault, before the late Discoveries of those Parts of the World. And as *Christ* came into the World *in the fulness of time*; so, *in the fulness of time*, that is, at the most fitting season, he revealed himself to the several Nations of it. God, who is infinitely gracious to all, and knows the Hearts and Dispositions of all Men, might deferr the restoring his Gospel to the *Chinese*, for instance, till that very time when he saw them best prepared for it: And it is remarkable, That the Discovery of the *Indies* happen'd about the time of the Reformation; that those poor People might have the Purity, as well as the Truth of Religion, if Christians had been as little wanting to them in their Charity, as God has been in the disposals of his Providence. He stays till they have *filled up the measure of their iniquities*, before he *punishes* a People: and for the same Reasons, of Mercy and Goodness, he waits for the most proper seasons to impart his Revealed Will to them; and to have it preached to them before, would be only to encrease their condemnation. And it

is not only Just, but Merciful, for him to withhold the knowledge of his Revealed Will from those who, he foresees, would reject it, and abuse the Opportunities which should be offer'd them, to the aggravation of their own guilt and punishment. Especially if it be observed,

2. That as to particular Persons, we have reason to believe, that God, who by so wonderful a Providence has taken care that every Nation under Heaven might have the True Religion preached in it, and who has the whole World at his disposal, and orders all things with great regard to the Salvation of Men; we have abundant cause to think, that he would, by some of the various methods of his Providence, or even by Miracle, bring such Men to the knowledge of the Truth, who live according to their present Knowledge, with a sincere and honest endeavour to improve it. When *St. Peter* was by Revelation sent to *Cornelius*, he made this inference from it, *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him, Act. x. 34, 35.* From whence, what less can we conclude, than that every Man, in any part of the World, who is sincerely good and pious in the practice of his Duty, so far as it is known to him, shall rather, by an express Revelation, have the rest discovered to him, as in the instance of *Cornelius*,
which

which gave occasion to these words of *St. Peter*, than that he should be suffer'd to perish, for want of a true Faith, and sufficient knowledge of his Duty? And it is Just with God, to punish those *Heathens* who sin without any Revealed Law, for their sins against Natural Reason and Conscience, and for neglecting to use and improve their Reason, and to embrace the Opportunities afforded them of becoming Christians. We may likewise be certain, that besides Natural Reason and Conscience, God in his Goodness is not wanting to afford such Inward Motions and Convictions of Mind to such of the *Heathen* as are not wilfully blind and stupified by their Vices, as may prepare them for the reception of the Gospel, which, by his Providence, he gives them so many Opportunities of becoming acquainted withal: And if once they do discern the Defects and Faults of their own Religions, which are so grossly against Natural Reason and Conscience, they may make enquiry of *Christians* concerning their Religion, as some of the *Americans* did of *Cortes's*; and the *Christians* (some of them at least) however negligent they be in propagating it, would never refuse to instruct them in it. And it must be remembered, that among those who have not received the True Religion, yet many Points are taught and believed which had their Original from Revelation, as is evident not only of the *Mahometans*, but of several *Heathen*

The Reasonableness and Certainty

Nations; which Points are so many Steps and *Preparatives* towards the reception of the whole Truth, if they be not wanting to themselves in pursuing them in their immediate tendency and consequences.

I shall not say, that the Merits of Christ, and the Salvation of the Gospel, do extend to those who in the integrity of their hearts die under an invincible ignorance of it; I believe rather, that God suffers no Man so qualified and disposed, to remain in invincible ignorance. But it is sufficient to vindicate God's Justice and Goodness, that all Nations have had such Opportunities of coming to the Knowledge of the Truth; and great Allowances may be made at the Last Day, for the Ignorance and unhappy Circumstances of particular Men. It was well said, That when God hath not thought fit to tell us how he will be pleased to deal with such Persons, it is not fit for us to tell Him how he ought to deal with them. But if it be difficult for us now, to *think* how it will please God to deal with the *Heathen*; it would be a thousand times more difficult to conceive how the Gracious and Merciful God could Govern and Judge the World, if all Mankind were in the state of *Heathens*, without any Divine Revelation.

What will become of the *Heathen*, as to their Eternal state, is not the Subject of this Discourse, nor doth it concern us to know; some

some of them will have more to plead for themselves, in point of ignorance, than others can have; and they are in the hands of the Merciful Creator and Saviour of Mankind, and there we must leave them. But it must be acknowledged, that it is much more agreeable to the Goodness and Mercy of God, to reveal his Will, and to give so many Opportunities to the World to be instructed in it, though never so many should neglect the Means of Salvation; than it is to suppose him to take no care to reduce Mankind to the sense and practice of Vertue and Religion, but to let them continue in all manner of Idolatry and Wickedness, without giving them any warning against it. *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: Isa. xlv. 19, 22. & xlviii. 16.*

Having proved, That the Scriptures want nothing requisite to a *Divine Revelation*, in regard either of their *Antiquity* or *Promulgation*; I proceed to shew, That they have *sufficient Evidence*, both by *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, in proof of their *Authority*.

This *Evidence* depends upon Matter of Fact, which concerns either the *Prophecies* and

I.

and

and *Miracles* themselves, in their several circumstances, as we find them stand Recorded ; or the Lives and Personal Qualifications of those by whom they were performed, or by whom they are related in the Scriptures. For if we can be assured both that they are truly related, and that, if they were done as they are related, they could proceed from none but a Divine Power ; we have all the Evidence for the Truth of the Scriptures that can be had for a Revelation.

C H A P. III.

Of Moses and Aaron.

THat *Moses* was a very Great and Wise Man, is related by several of the most eminent Heathen Writers ; and I think it has never been denied by any Man. But it is no less evident, that he was likewise a very Good and Pious Man. He frequently declares his own Failings and Infirmities, *Exod.* iii. 11. & iv. 1, 10, 13. *Num.* xi. 10. & xx. 12. & xxvii. 14. and never speaks any thing tending to his own Praise, but upon a just and necessary occasion, when it might become a prudent and modest Man, especially one Divinely Inspired : For all the Praise of
such

such an one doth not terminate in himself, but is attributed to God, whose Instrument and Servant he is ; and in such cases where God's Honour is concerned, it was a Duty to set forth the Favour and Goodness of God towards him, though some Honour did redound to himself thereby. The greatest Masters of Decency have not thought it always improper for Men to commend themselves, either because they supposed some occasions might require it, or because it was a more usual thing in ancient Times, when Mens Lives and Manners were more natural and sincere ; and they oftener spoke as they thought both of themselves and others ; yet we no where find Men speaking so freely in disparagement of themselves, as in the Holy Scriptures : Which shews, that *Moses*, and the rest of the Inspired Writers, little regarded their own Praise or Dispraise, but wrote what God was pleased to appoint ; it being a thing indifferent to them, so God might be honoured, whether they lost or gained in their own Reputation by it. But what we read of *Moses*, *Num.* xii. 3. that he was *very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth*, which is the only commendable Character that *Moses* gives of himself, may be translated, that he was the most *afflicted Man*, (according to the Marginal Reading ;) and if he mentions his own Meekness, he mentions also his *great Anger*,

or heat of Anger, *Exod.* xi. 8. and his being very wroth, *Num.* xvi. 15. But if *Moses* had not had more respect to Truth, than to his own Reputation, he would never have left it upon Record, That he so often declined the Message and Employment which God appointed him to undertake, *Exod.* iii. 11, 13. & iv. 1, 10, 13, 14. and that God was angry with him upon other occasions, and for that reason would not permit him to enter into the promised Land: He would certainly have ascribed *Balaam's* Prophecy, and *Jethro's* Advice, to himself; at least he would never have Recorded, That by *Jethro's* Counsel, he took up a new and better Method for the administration of Justice: If he had been led by Ambition and Vain-glory, he would have endeavoured, by these things, to adorn his own Character; and would never have lessened it, by telling his own Infirmities at the same time, when, to the diminution of himself, he publishes the Excellencies of others. The Wonders of the Magicians of *Aegypt* are not concealed by him: and being to give an account of his own Genealogy from *Levi*, he first sets down the Families of *Reuben* and *Simeon*, the two elder Brothers, lest he might seem to arrogate too much to himself, and his own Tribe. Some have observed, that *Moses* relates his own Birth to have been by a Marriage contrary to the Laws afterwards by himself established: which indeed is doubt-

doubtful, by reason of the latitude of signification in the word *Sister* in the Hebrew Language: yet it is certain, he was not careful to avoid the being thought to have been born from such a Marriage; as he would have been, if his Laws had been of his own contrivance, lest his own Reputation, or the Authority of his Laws, or perhaps both, might have suffered by it, *Exod.* vi. 14, 20. He sets forth the Ingratitude, Idolatry, and perpetual Revolts and Murmurings of his whole Nation, and relates the Failings and Faults of their Ancestors the Patriarchs, and particularly of *Levi*, from whom he was descended, *Gen.* xxxiv. 30. & xlix. 6. He spares neither his People, nor his Ancestors, nor himself, in what he relates; and these are all the Characters of a faithful Historian, and a sincere Man, that can be desired.

And as *Moses* was not ambitious of Praise, so neither was he ambitious of Power and Dominion. For besides that he entered upon such an Undertaking, as no sober Man would have attempted without a Revelation, it appearing otherwise impossible to accomplish it, his whole Conduct shews, that he had no design of advancing his own Interest or Dominion. If he had been never so Ambitious, he needed not have gone into the Wilderness to seek his Preferment, amongst a wandering and stubborn People, when he had been bred up to all the Honours and the

Pleasures that *Ægypt* or *Pharaoh's* Court could afford : but he refused to be called the son of *Pharaoh's* daughter ; chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of *Ægypt*, Heb. xi. 24, 25. He undertook to lead the People of *Israel*, for Forty Years, through a barren Wilderness ; where he could promise himself but a very uneasy and inglorious Reign, if that had been his Design ; and, by the course of Nature, he could not hope to out-live that period of Time : and tho' he was preserved, in his Old Age, in the full strength and vigour of Manhood ; yet, upon their entrance into the *promised Land*, he meekly resigned himself to death, in the very sight and Borders of *Canaan* ; knowing before-hand that he must not be suffered to possess the Land which he had been so many years, in so great dangers, leading the People of *Israel* to enjoy ; though he doth not conceal how desirous he was to pass over *Jordan*, Deut. iii. 23, &c. The History of his Death is like that of his Life, related with a peculiar kind of native simplicity : He is not said to be taken up into Heaven, as *Enoch* and *Elijah* were, and as the *Romans* feigned of *Romulus* ; but to die ; and his Sepulchre was hid, to prevent the Superstitious and Idolatrous Veneration which might have been paid to the Remains

Remains of so Great a Person. And tho' he had Sons, yet they were but private Men, no otherwise known to us, than as they were his Sons ; the Government he conferred upon *Joshua*, one of another Tribe. *Moses* therefore was the furthest of any Man from Vain-glorious, or Ambitious and Aspiring Designs ; and could propose no other Advantage to himself, but the fulfilling the Will of God, in delivering his Commandments to the People of *Israel*, and following his Directions in his Conduct and Government.

Aaron was of a different Temper from *Moses*, and was envious of him, and both *Aaron* and *Miriam* murmured against him. It is so notorious, that there could be no contrivance between them to deceive the People ; that it was the immediate and visible Power of God, which kept *Aaron* as well as the rest in obedience to *Moses*. Upon *Moses's* absence, *Aaron* complied with the People, in making a Golden Calf ; and his two eldest Sons offered strange Fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded ; for which they were both destroyed by Fire miraculously issuing out from the Presence of the Lord : And *Aaron* held his peace, knowing that this Punishment was inflicted by God himself, and having nothing to reply to *Moses*, when he declared to him the Justice of it. And both *Aaron* and his other two Sons

Sons are forbidden, upon pain of Death, to mourn for them, *Lev. x. 1, 2, 3, 6.* At last, by the Commandment of God, *Aaron* goes up into *Mount Hor*, to die there, not being permitted to enter into the *Land of Promise*.

Thus *Moses* and *Aaron* were sometimes at disagreement, *Aaron* envying *Moses*: *Aaron* lost two of his Sons, by a signal Judgment from Heaven; and *Moses* advanced neither of his; and both *Moses* and *Aaron* died by the particular Appointment and Command of God, for their Offences against him, never enjoying, nor, for a long time before, expecting to enjoy the *Land of Promise*. And therefore, as they could never have performed what they did, but by the Almighty Power of God; so they could have no Motive or Inducement to attempt it, but his Command and Promise of Assistance revealed to them.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Pentateuch.

AS the Books entitled to *Moses* are confessed by all to be of the greatest Antiquity; so we have it confirmed to us, by the Authority of *Heathen* Writers themselves, that the Books which go under his Name, are

are indeed of his writing; besides the unanimous Testimony of the whole *Jewish* Nation, ever since *Moses's* time, from the first writing of them: which is infinitely better proof of their being Authentick, and entitled to the true Author, than can be pretended for any Books but the Holy Scriptures. Divers Texts of the *Pentateuch* imply, that it was written by *Moses*; and the Book of *Joshua*, as well as other Books of Scripture, import as much; and though some Passages have been thought to imply the contrary; yet this is but a late Opinion, and has been sufficiently confuted by learned Men.

It is observable, whoever wrote these Five Books, that there is no Partiality shewn to any one whomsoever. *Noah* is said to be overcome with Wine, and exposed to the mockery of one of his Sons. *Lot* is described not only to have been drunken, but to have lain with his own Daughters. *Abraham* himself denies his Wife twice; and *Isaac* imitates him in it. *Jacob* gets the Blessing, by fraud and subtilty, from his Brother *Esau*. *Joseph's* Brethren sell him into *Ægypt*; and he, when he is there, learns to swear *By the Life of Pharaoh*. The Faults of *Aaron*, and of *Moses* himself, (as I have already observed) are not concealed. On the other side, particular notice is taken how *Melchizedeck* blessed *Abraham*, and received Tythes of him: *And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of*

of the greater, Heb. vii. 7. The Advice of *Jethro* is recorded; and the Prophecies of *Balaam* himself are punctually set down. It was no design of the Sacred Pen-man to write a Panegyrick upon any Man, but to represent the Failings and Infirmities, as well as the Excellencies of each Person; and to shew by what various Methods the Providence of God brought to pass his gracious Designs; how he turned Evil into Good, and made use even of the Infirmities and Sins of Men, to accomplish his Purposes.

In the Book of *Genesis* we have a short Account of the most memorable and remarkable Things which had past to the times of *Moses*; as the Creation of the World, the Institution of the *Sabbath*, the Fall of Man, the Promise of the *Messiah*, and the custom of offering Sacrifices as Types of his Death: who first committed Murther, and who first brought in Polygamy; the Invention of divers Arts, the Flood, the Confusion of Tongues; the Original of the several Nations of the World, with the Chronology of the whole: all which is comprehended in a little compass, but a larger and more particular Account is given of *Abraham* and his Family: For here the Scene begins to open to the main Design of the Work, the Book of *Genesis* being as an Introduction to the rest of the *Pentateuch*, and containing such things as were requisite to be premised.

And

And in the beginning of the History of *Abraham*, it is noted, that *the Canaanite was then in the land*, Gen. xii. 6. even at that very time when *Abraham* erected an Altar to the Lord, ver. 7. this being a great Encouragement to the *Israelites*, to excite them to follow the Example of their Father *Abraham*, who worshipped the True God, in a publick and solemn manner, in that Land which they were now going to possess, and amongst that People which they were now to drive out, and which, at that time when the Land was promised them, were the Inhabitants of it; and God, who had protected *Abraham* in so signal a manner, would no less assist them.

And if we consider those things particularly, wherein *Moses* himself is concerned as an Agent, as well as an Historian, there can be no pretence for any Man to doubt, but that at least the principal Points of the History of *Moses* are true; that is, that *Moses* was the Governor or General of the People of *Israel*, who conducted them out of *Ægypt*; that they travelled for many Years in the Wilderness; that they fought divers Battels with the several Nations who opposed their journeying into the Land of *Canaan*; and, that *Moses* gave them the Laws which we find there recorded. These are the chief Points of the History of *Moses*, which are, as it were the Foundation of all the rest; the

the rest being but as circumstances to shew the manner of doing it, and the Power by which all this was done. And that these main Points are true, it was never denied by those *Heathens* themselves who most reproach'd and vilify'd the *Jewish Nation*: They acknowledged that *Moses* was the great General and Law-giver of the *Israelites*; they owned that the *Israelites* came out of *Aegypt*; they could deny nothing of the History it self, but only gave wrong Accounts, partly out of ignorance, and partly out of malice and design, of the Manner and Means by which this was effected, and the Reasons and Occasions upon which it came to pass. From the Books of *Josephus against Apion*, in which he gives an Account of what the most ancient Authors of other Nations have delivered concerning the *Jews*; and from what the latter *Heathens*, *Strabo*, *Tacitus*, *Justin* and others, after the *Jews* became so odious and contemptible in the eyes of all Nations, have written; it is evident, that the great and fundamental Points, as to the Matters of Fact, are confessed; and the only Dispute is concerning the Manner in which they were brought about, and the Means whereby all was effected.

Now we take the Histories of all other Nations, rather from themselves, than from Foreigners and Strangers to their Affairs, or professed Enemies; and it were extreme Partiality

tiality to admit the Accounts we have of the *Jewish Affairs*, from Authors who lived so much too late to have any certain Information of the things they write about, and who, upon every occasion, shew such disaffection to their Name and Nation, and contradict each other, and themselves too, as *Josephus* shews; it would, I say, be notorious Partiality to follow such Authors, rather than credit the *Jewish Records* attested and delivered down to us by the unanimous Approbation and Testimony of the whole Nation.

And when I come to consider the Miracles wrought by *Moses*, I shall prove, that they were of that nature, and performed in such a manner, as that they could not be feigned or counterfeit at first, nor the Account given of them in the *Pentateuch* falsified afterwards; and therefore these Five Books of *Moses* must be genuine, and of Divine Authority, being written by him who had so many ways given Evidence of his Divine Commission.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Of the Predictions or Prophecies contained in the Books of Moses.

IT was foretold by God himself, upon the Fall of our First Parents, That *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. *Maimonides* is observed to take particular notice, that it was the Seed of the *Woman*, and not of the *Man*; and the *Jews*, in their *Targums*, are observed to apply this Text to the *Messias*, which was fulfilled in our Saviour Christ, who was born of a *Woman*, that was a *Virgin*, and had no *Man* to his *Father*: And therefore this Prediction, express'd thus precisely concerning the Seed of the *Woman*, could be fulfilled in no other Person; and no other Person ever gained such Victories over the Enemy of Mankind, who had so long tyrannized over the Sons of Men. God revealed the precise Time of the Flood to *Noah*; who thereupon built an Ark, and foretold the Destruction of the World to that wicked Generation, and was a *Preacher of Righteousness* and *Repentance* to them, Gen. vi. 3. After the Flood, *Noah*, by a Prophetick Spirit, foretold the Fate and Condition of the Posterity of his three Sons, Gen. ix. 25. That *Canaan* should
be

be Servant to *Shem*; which was accomplished, when the *Children of Israel*, the Posterity of *Shem*, subdued the *Canaanites*, and possessed their Land, about Eight hundred Years after this Prophecy: That *Japhet* should dwell in the Tents of *Shem*; which was fulfilled in the *Greeks* and *Romans*, descended from *Japhet*, when they conquer'd *Asia*: That *Canaan* should likewise be the Servant of *Japhet*, as well as of *Shem*. Upon which *Mr. Mede* observes, (n) that the Posterity of *Cham* never subdued the Children either of *Japhet*, or of *Shem*; though *Shem* hath subdued *Japhet*, and *Japhet* hath conquer'd *Shem*: which made (o) *Hannibal*, descended from *Canaan*, cry out, with amazement of Soul, *Agnosco fatum Carthaginis*.
(n) Mede, Book 1. Disc. 48.
(o) Liv. l. 27.

God promiseth *Abraham* a Son, in his old Age, by *Sarah* his Wife, who was likewise of a great Age; and declares, that his Posterity, by this Son, should be exceeding numerous; that they should inherit the Land of *Canaan*, after they had been afflicted in a strange Land Four hundred Years, Gen. xv. 13. and that then they should come out of that Land with great substance, but that God would judge the Nation that had oppressed them, or that he would procure their Deliverance by signal Judgments upon their Oppressors; and that in the fourth generation they should be brought back again to the Land of Promise, ver. 16. which agrees exactly with the
Delive-

Deliverance of the *Children of Israel* out of *Ægypt*, computing the Years from the time that the Promise was made to *Abraham*, (*Exod. xii. 40. Gal. iii. 17.*) and reckoning the Four Generations to be betwixt *Isaac* the Son promised to *Abraham*, and *Moses*, in whom the Prediction was fulfilled. This Promise made to *Abraham and his Seed*, was renewed several times, and repeated again to Him, and to *Isaac* and *Jacob*, *Gen. xxvi. 3. & xxviii. 14.* and was all along depended upon by the *Israelites*. God foretold of *Abraham*, That *all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him*, *Gen. xviii. 18.* which was fulfilled, in that God made *Abraham's* Posterity his Messengers to communicate his Will to the rest of Mankind, and more-especially in that Blessing which all Nations received in the Birth of *Christ*. This is a remarkable Prophecy concerning the greatest of Blessings, and is often repeated.

The Prophecy of *Isaac*, concerning *Esau* and *Jacob*, *Gen. xxvii. 40.* first, That the Posterity of *Esau* should serve *Jacob's* Posterity, was fulfilled, in *David's* Victories over the *Edomites*, *2 Sam. viii. 14. 1 King. xi. 15. 1 Chron. xviii. 13.* and by *Amaziah*, *2 King. xiv. 7.* and then that part of it, That the *Edomites* should break the yoke from off their neck, was accomplish'd, *2 King. viii. 20. 2 Chron. xxi. 8.* *Joseph's* own Dream, and his Interpretation of the Dream of *Pharaoh*, when

when none of the Magicians or Wise-men of *Ægypt* were able to interpret it, had remarkable and publick Circumstances, that could neither be mistaken nor forgotten in the accomplishment. *Jacob* describes the Borders of their several Possessions in the Land of *Canaan*, though it were so many years after divided among the Tribes by *Lot*, *Gen. xlix. 13.* He foretold the different state and condition of the rest of his Sons, and particularly prophesied, That *the scepter should not depart from Judah, until Shiloh came*: And upon the fulfilling of this and other Prophecies in the *Pentateuch*, not only the *Jews*, but the *Samaritans*, who received no other Prophecies as they did these, expected the *Messias* at the time in which our Saviour appeared in the World; and believed on him, because they saw the Prophecies fulfilled in Him, *Joh. iv. 25, 29, 39, 42.* *Joseph* took an oath of the children of *Israel*, saying, *God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence*, *Gen. l. 25.* which they did accordingly, *Exod. xiii. 19.* *Jacob* had desired to be buried in the Land of *Canaan*; inso-much that he caused *Joseph* to swear to him, that he would bury him there, and not in *Ægypt*; and *Joseph* and his Brethren went into *Canaan* to bury their Father, because that was the Land where *Abraham* and *Isaac* had been buried, and the Land which their Posterity was afterwards to possess: but

M *Joseph,*

Joseph, as a further token of Assurance to the *Israelites*, that they should inherit that Land, would not have his own Corps carried thither, at his death, but ordered his Bones to be kept, and carried up by their Posterity, at their leaving *Ægypt*; and in the mean time, they were a perpetual Monument and Representation to them of the Promise made to their Fore-fathers, and a Ground and Motive for their Trust and Confidence in God for the Accomplishment of it.

The Remembrance of *Balaam's* Prophecy was preserved in the *East*; and the Wise-men, upon the appearance of the Star, knowing it to be fulfilled, came to *Jerusalem*, to enquire where they might find the King of the *Jews*, then newly born, *Num. xxiv. 15. Mat. ii. 2.* He prophesied likewise of *Agag* by Name, saying of *Israel*, *And his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted, Num. xxiv. 7.* thereby foretelling the Destruction of *Agag*, by *Saul*; who being the first King that ever *Israel* had, overcame *Agag* King of the *Amalekites*, *1 Sam. xv. 8.* The same *Balaam* foretold the Conquests of *Alexander*, in these words, *And ships shall come from the coasts of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, Num. xxiv. 24.* By the *Coasts of Chittim*, are to be understood the *Coasts of Greece*, from whence *Alexander's* Army was transported into *Asia*; for *Alexander* came out of the Land of *Chettim*, or *Chittim*, *1 Mac. i. 1.*
and

and *Perseus* was King of the *Citims*, or *Macedonians*, *chap. viii. 5.* These several Prophecies we have recorded in the Books of *Moses*, and ascribed to others; and the last, containing so many remarkable things, is from the mouth of an Enemy.

Moses himself foretold, That the *Children of Israel* should, after Forty Years, come into the *Land of Promise*; That they should prove Victorious over the *Canaanites*; and, That their Country should, by the Divine Care and Protection, be preserved in safety, whilst they went up to worship at *Jerusalem*, thrice every Year: *Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel: For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders; neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the year, Exod. xxxiv. 23, 24.* Here is the Promise of a constant Miracle to be fulfilled to the *Israelites* thrice every Year, as long as their Government stood: all their Males were to go up to *Jerusalem*, at three set and known times, every year; and yet their Enemies round about them, whom they had so many ways provoked, were, by the Almighty Power of God, restrained from taking any advantage of this opportunity, which was frequently and notoriously given them, of Invading their Countrey. The very Nature and Constitution of the Jewish

Worship, made it impossible for their Government to subsist in the observation of their Religion, without a Miracle wrought three times in a Year for their preservation. And the fulfilling of this Promise, which God had made to them by *Moses*, and the preserving of them in the performance of that Worship which he had appointed them, was a continual Confirmation of his Law, and a repeated Assurance that it was from God.

By the Law of *Moses* likewise, every Seventh Year they were permitted neither to sow their Land, nor to prune their Vineyards, nor to gather any Corn or Fruits that grew of their own accord: which was a Law that must have brought them under great extremities, and the observation of it had been impracticable, if the extraordinary and miraculous Blessing of God had not supplied this constant want of the seventh year's Product, with as constant an Overplus in the preceding years. For as God, by *Moses*, foretold, That on the Sixth Day there should fall Manna enough to supply them on the *Sabbath-day*; so they had a Promise of Three Year's Fruits precisely every Sixth Year, to supply that want which the Sabbatical Year must otherwise have reduced them to: *And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: Then I will command my blessing upon*

upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit, until the ninth year; until her fruits come in, ye shall eat of the old store, Lev. xxv. 20, 21, 22. Which is another clear Instance, that the People of *Israel* could never have subsisted in the observation of their Law, but by the constant and miraculous accomplishment of the Prophecies, which contained the Promises made to them for their Preservation.

In blessing the Twelve Tribes of *Israel*, he foretold the peculiar state and condition of every distinct Tribe, *Deut. xxxiii.* He foretold to them all in general, That they should have miraculous success against the *Canaanites*; That they should possess themselves of their Land; That they should set Kings over them; That they should have a peculiar Place of Worship, whither they should all resort; and that they should have the Divine Oracles, and a succession of Prophets, for their direction in all Matters of great importance and difficulty. And *Joshua* appeals to the Experience of the *Children of Israel*, whether all had not been fulfilled which was promised, as far as his time: *And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God*

spake concerning you : all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof, Josh. xxiii. 14. The extent of the Dominions of the *Children of Israel*, after they came to be settled in the Land of *Canaan*, is foretold, *Exod.* xxiii. 31. and fulfilled, *2 Sam.* viii. 3. *Ezra* iv. 20. And *Solomon*, at the Dedication of the Temple, declared in the audience of all the People, That *there had not failed one word of all God's good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant*, *1 King.* viii. 56.

Moses also foretold, that besides a constant succession of Prophets, for many Ages, there should arise a Prophet of extraordinary Power and Authority ; and whosoever would not hear that Prophet, should be destroyed, *Deut.* xviii. 18. This Prophet was the great expectation of the *Jews*, at the time of our Saviour's coming, *Job.* i. 21. & vi. 14. & vii. 40. and the Apostles prove our Saviour to be him, *Act.* iii. 22. & vii. 37. Lastly, *Moses* foretold the Disobedience and the Revolt of the *Children of Israel*, the Judgments that should befall them for their Iniquities, and their Deliverance upon their Repentance, he foretold so many Years before they had any King, That they, and *their King whom they would set over them*, should be carried into Captivity ; and that at the same time, when they were taken Captive by the *Assyrians*, who are described in the very same words

words that the other Prophets use concerning them, the remainder should be carried into *Ægypt*, *Deut.* xxviii. 36, 49, 50, 68. and we see it came accordingly to pass, *Fer.* xliii. And the Siege of *Samaria* by the *Assyrians*, and of *Jerusalem* both by them and the *Romans*, is particularly described to the very circumstance of their *eating the flesh of their sons, and of their daughters*, *Deut.* xxviii. 53. which is a thing that has scarce ever happen'd in any other Siege but those of *Samaria* and of *Jerusalem*, *Lam.* ii. 20. & iv. 10. *2 King.* vi. 29. This monstrous and dreadful thing was twice known in *Jerusalem* ; first, when it was besieged by *Nebuchadnezzar* ; and again, when it was destroyed by the *Romans* under *Titus* : And such a circumstance could not be foretold so long before, but by a Divine Prescience ; and that so strange and unnatural a thing should befall the *Children of Israel* three several times, according to the express words of a Prophecy, could have nothing of Chance in it.

Thus we see, that besides the Prophecies concerning the other Nations of the Earth, every State and Condition of the People of *Israel*, from their first Original, to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, was the perpetual Fulfilling of express Prophecies contained in the Books of *Moses*.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Miracles wrought by Moses.

IF it be once proved, That *Moses* did what is related of him in the *Pentateuch*; it will unavoidably follow, That he did it by a Divine Power, and that he was God's Servant and Minister; and that therefore whatsoever he did or wrote, as by his Direction and Command, was really so. For if there ever were or can be any such thing as a *Miracle*, it must be confessed, that the Works performed by *Moses* were such; and therefore the only Enquiry will be, Whether they were really performed by Him? since it is absurd to think, that God may not, upon great Reasons, alter the course of Nature.

And I shall undertake to prove, supposing only that there was such a Man as *Moses*, and that the Jewish Law was given by him, That it is of Divine Authority, and stands confirmed by all the Miracles which are related in the *Pentateuch*, to have been wrought by *Moses*. And that there was such a Man, and that he delivered the Law to the *Israelites*, is affirmed by the best Heathen Authors, as *Diodorus Siculus*, *Strabo*, and others; and was never yet, that I have heard of, question'd by any Man: For those who will
not

not acknowledge that *Moses* wrote the Books which contain it, yet confess, that the Law it self was of his prescribing. But if it should be question'd, whether there ever was such a Man, who gave them their Law; how absurd is it to imagine, that a new and burthensome Law, which at first was so very uneasie to them, and which nothing but a full persuasion of its Divine Authority could ever have made them so zealous for, should be received by any Nation, merely upon a feigned and groundless Report, that *Moses* had, at some time or other, delivered it, in such a manner, and in such circumstances, if there never had been such a Man, or such a Law-giver in the World? Could any one, or more Men, persuade a whole Nation to this? or could a whole Nation conspire to deceive their Posterity with a belief of it? What mighty Charm could there be in a Name never heard of before, and in a Story newly invented, that a whole Nation should presently grow fond of it? They must consider Humane Nature very little, who can fancy any thing so unnatural.

I shall therefore take it for granted, that there was such a Man as *Moses*, and that the Jewish Law was given by him: And if it be once proved, that the Matters of Fact, or Miracles related of him, were indeed performed, as they are related to have been;

no rational Man can doubt but that they were brought to pass by an Almighty Power. I shall now therefore consider the History of the *Jews* barely as National Records, not as written by an Inspired Author : For it will appear from them, considered only as an Account of Matter of Fact, that *Moses* was a Person inspired and assisted by God, and both wrote and did all by God's express Will and Appointment. And if we question the Authority of the Books of *Moses* in this matter, when they are considered but as National Records, it must be upon one of these accounts : Either, (1.) Because the Matters of Fact contained in them, as they are there related to have been done, were not at first sufficiently attested. Or, (2.) Because the Records themselves are feigned, and therefore the Relations there set down are not to be depended upon. For if the Miracles be sufficiently attested, supposing the Truth of the History ; then, if the History be true, the Miracles must be so too.

1. The Miracles and Matters of Fact contained in the Books of *Moses*, as they are there related to have been done, were at first sufficiently attested. The permission of Polygamy amongst the *Israelites*, for the encrease of that People ; the peculiar Fruitfulness of the Climate of *Ægypt*, where the Women are observed to bring forth often

two

two or three, sometimes more Children at a birth ; the long Lives of Mankind, in those Ages ; and above all, the Promise of God, made to *Abraham*, That he would bless and multiply his Posterity in *Isaac's* Line, *Gen. xxii. 17.* caused the *Children of Israel* to be exceeding numerous, in a few Generations after they came into *Ægypt* : *A Syrian ready to perish was their father ; and he went down into Ægypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty and populous, Deut. xxvi. 5.* The fighting-Men, from twenty years old and upward, that were numbred in the Wilderness of *Sinai*, in the second year after they came out of the Land of *Ægypt*, were *Six hundred thousand, and Three thousand and five hundred and fifty*, besides the Tribe of *Levi*, *Num. i. 1. 46, 47.* And the Males of the *Levites* that were numbred, from Thirty Years old to Fifty, were *Eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore*, *Num. iv. 47. 48.* And the number of Males, from Twenty Years old and upward, which was taken in the Plains of *Moab*, was *Six hundred thousand, and a thousand seven hundred and thirty*, besides the *Levites* ; and those that were numbred of them, were *Twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward, and not a man of these was numbred before in the wilderness of Sinai, chap. xxvi. 51, 62, 64.* And those of the other Sex must be supposed to have been about

about the same number, when both these Accompts were taken: In all, reckoning Men, Women, and Children and Servants, the Number is computed at Three Millions.

And all this People, the Parents, and the Children, who, as they died, grew up in their stead, were conducted, for Forty Years together, by a constant course of Miracles wrought continually in their sight. God took him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrours, Deut. iv. 34. They could not be ignorant, whether there were Miracles wrought to procure their Deliverance out of *Ægypt*; these were publick and notorious both to the *Israelites* and the *Ægyptians*; the Magicians were not able to do the like with their Inchantments, but were forced to confess, *This is the finger of God*, Exod. viii. 19. and they were of that nature, and of such mighty consequence, that they could not fail of being particularly taken notice of, when two Nations were so much concerned in the Effects and Events of them. The Children of *Israel* had been Witnesses of Ten Plagues inflicted successively upon the *Ægyptians*, in the most remarkable manner that can be conceived, to procure their Deliverance; and when *Pharaoh* pursued them, as they were going away, it was impossible for them to escape from him but by
Miracle;

Miracle; the People were in the greatest consternation, they wished themselves again in *Ægypt*, and made such Expostulations with *Moses* as it was natural for Men in that condition to make, and such as shewed, that, upon the first opportunity, they would have been ready to deliver up *Moses*, to secure themselves, and make their peace with *Pharaoh*: And they said unto *Moses*, *Because there were no graves in Ægypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Ægypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Ægypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Ægyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Ægyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness*, Exod. xiv. 11, 12. But the *Israelites* were purposely brought into this Distress, by God's express Will and Command, that he might get him honour upon *Pharaoh*, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horse-men, ver. 17. And the Sea being divided at *Moses's* lifting up his Rod, the Children of *Israel* went in the midst of it upon dry-ground, and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left, ver. 22. And could they be ignorant whether they walked in the Water, or upon dry Land? whether they were the Men that had escaped, or whether they had been all drowned? The words are express, that the Waters were on both sides of them, in their passage,

passage, and that they were separated to make way for them; which could not fall out by any ebbing of the Sea, for then they would have had Water but on one side of them, whereas now the Waters stood equally on both hands. And nothing can be supposed more absurd, than it is to imagine that neither the *Ægyptians* nor the *Israelites* should understand the nature of the *Red-Sea*, but that the course of the Tide should be known only to *Moses*.

At the giving of the Law, the whole People of *Israel* had warning given them three days before, that they might sanctifie and prepare themselves to make their Appearance before the Lord: *All the people saw the thundrings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and beheld the mountain smoaking*: and the Lord spake, in the audience of the whole Assembly, the words of the Ten Commandments; and they were struck with such a terrour, that they removed and stood afar off, and desired *Moses* that he would acquaint them with what God should be pleased to give him in command concerning them, that they might no longer hear God speaking to them, lest they should die, *Exod. xx. 18. Deut. v. 22. The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys, Exod. xl. 38. whether it were two days, or a month, or a year that the cloud*
tarried

tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed, Num. ix. 22. From the time of their escape out of *Ægypt*, the *Pillar of the Cloud by day, and the Pillar of Fire by night*: the Manna with which they were fed, during the whole time of their journeying in the Wilderness, till the very day after they had eaten of the corn of the land of *Canaan*, *Exod. xvi. 35. Jos. v. 12.* and their Garments lasting for so long a time, without any decay, *Deut. xxix. 5.* these were constant and perpetual Miracles for forty years together; and it is the most impossible thing in the world to suppose, that a People consisting of so many Hundred Thousands, should for so long a time be imposed upon in things of this nature, their Eyes, and Taste, and all their Senses were Witnesses, that they were conducted and fed and cloathed by Miracles for Forty Years together.

Indeed, it was impossible to lead so great a Multitude, through a vast and barren Wilderness, by so long and tedious Journeys, without the help of Miracles. If they had been under no other distress but want of Food, in so barren a place, it had been impossible for any number of Men, and much more for so vast a multitude, to subsist for any time, without a Miracle: but they were fed with *Manna from Heaven*; not with such

as the Manna is which is now any where to be found, which is a kind of Honey-dew ; but with *Manna* which was fit for Nourishment, not for Physick, and so hard as to be ground in Mills, and beaten in Mortars, and baked in Pans, *Num. xi. 8.* and yet it was melted by the Sun, and bred Worms and stunk, if it were kept but one night, except it were on the night before the *Sabbath* ; though again, when it was to be performed for a Memorial to future Generations, nothing was more lasting ; and it fell on every Day of the Week but the *Sabbath* : The Manna therefore which is now, of what sort soever it be, is of quite a different Nature from this Miraculous *Manna*, (though it have its Name from it,) as a learned Physician (p) has proved. Their *Water* was as miraculous as their Food, and their *Cloathing* as either ; neither their *Raiment decayed*, nor their *Bread* and *Water failed*, till they arrived in the *promised Land*.

(p) Jo.
Chrys. Mag.
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The March of the *Greek Army* out of *Asia*, under the Conduct of *Xenophon*, after the death of *Cyrus*, is looked upon as a thing scarce to be equalled in all humane Story, though that was but for one Year, and three Months ; and the Difficulties they met with were nothing, in comparison of those that beset the *Israelites* on every side, in *that great and terrible wilderness*, wherein were *fiery serpents*, and *scorpions*, and *drought*, *Deut. viii. 15.*
a land

a land of desarts, and of pits, of drought, and of the shadow of death ; a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt, *Jer. ii. 6.* Nothing but a Power of Miracles could have sustained them, and nothing but the Sense of it could have kept them within any Bounds of Duty and Obedience.

We see how froward and rebellious they were upon all occasions, notwithstanding the wonderful Power and Presence of God continually manifest amongst them ; they would have been content with the *Ægyptian Slavery*, and the *Ægyptian Gods* too, rather than endure the Hardships of the Wilderness. *Moses* complains, that they were *almost ready to stone him*, *Exod. xvii. 4.* and out of despondency ; prayed, that God would *kill him out of hand*, rather than lay so great a burden upon him, *Num. xi. 15.* And whoever can believe, that *Moses*, by his own Skill and Managment, could lead such a Multitude through such a Wilderness, so many Years Journey, can, it seems, believe any thing rather than the Scriptures : for this is one of the most incredible things that can be conceived ; but it is not in the least incredible, that he might do it by the Divine Power and Assistance.

The *Children of Israel* tempted God *ten times*, by their Murmurings, and their distrust of his Power and Care over them, *Num. xiv. 22.* for which, many of them were punish'd with death ; till at last, the whole number of Men

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that were Twenty Years old and upwards, had this Judgment denounced against them, That, for their Murmurings, but two of them by name, *Caleb* the Son of *Jephunneh*, and *Joshua* the Son of *Nun*, should be suffered to enter into the *promised Land*, and the rest should all die in the *Wilderness*; but that after Forty Years wandering in the *Wilderness*, their Children should be brought in to possess it: *I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there shall they die*, Num. xiv. 35. And the Men who were sent out to search the Land, and brought the evil report upon it, died forthwith *by the plague before the Lord*, ver. 37. and these Men were the Heads of the *Children of Israel*, a Man of every Tribe being chosen out, *every one a Ruler amongst them*, chap. xiii. 2, 3. and but two of them agreed in giving the true Account of the Land; so great an aversion they had to proceed any farther in their way thither: *And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried: and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Ægypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness. And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it*

it not better for us to return into Ægypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Ægypt. And all the Congregation were for stoning Joshua and Caleb, if they had not been hindered by the glory of the Lord appearing in the tabernacle of the congregation, before all the children of Israel, Num. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10. Now, upon so general a defection, to pronounce peremptorily, That but Two by name, of so many Thousands, should go in to inherit the Land of Promise, and that all the rest should die in that very Wilderness which they complained so much of, and that no less than Forty Years were to be spent in that wandering condition, which they were already so weary of: This is such a Method of quelling so general a Discontent and Mutiny, as never was heard of before nor since, and which could proceed from nothing less than a Wisdom and Authority which could check and controul the most combined and inveterate Perverseness of men; and a Power which struck the Spreaders of this false Report with immediate death, before their eyes, for an Example of that Vengeance which they must all expect would fall upon them, sooner or later, within the space of Forty Years. So that hereby was taken off all prospect of Advantage, and all hopes of any Reward for what they now, with so much regret and impatience, underwent; and from henceforth they were led

merely by Conviction of the Divine Power and Presence amongst them, and of the Terrors of those Judgments, which, in all Revolts, seized upon the Disobedient. And now being restless and uneasy in their present condition, and past all hopes of remedying it, like desperate Men, they were upon every little occasion thrown into violent Commotions, but were as soon controlled and appeased by visible Judgments upon the chief Authors of them.

For when we read, soon after, that a Rebellion was raised against *Moses*, by *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*; God gave such evident Tokens of that Authority which he had invested him withal, and so signally manifested, that what he had done amongst them, was by his Power and Commission, that it was impossible for any of them to be deceived in it, or to doubt of it. Though the truth of it is, they had never from the very first doubted of God's Power amongst them, but were acted now with a Spirit of Rage and Despair, like the Men described by the Prophet, *fretting themselves, and cursing their king, and their God, and looking upwards*, *Isai. viii. 21.* *Korah*, of the Tribe of *Levi*; and *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and *On*, of the Tribe of *Reuben*, being Principal and Leading Men of these two Tribes, with *Two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown*, gathered themselves together against
Moses

Moses and Aaron, charging them, That they *took too much upon them.* And to clear himself of this Accusation, *Moses* implores God to vindicate his Innocency, before all the People; and, by agreement, *Korah* and *Aaron* appeared before the Lord, with Censers in their Hands, and Two hundred and fifty Men besides with their Censers likewise. *Korah*, at the time appointed, gathered all the Congregation against *Moses* and *Aaron*, unto the Door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation. So that here was the most solemn Appearance of the whole People, who had entertained great Jealousies against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and were now met together, to see whether they could give sufficient Proof of their Authority, which they challenged over them. The Time and Place was appointed, and they came enclined and prepared to receive any farther ill impressions concerning *Moses* and *Aaron*, if they could not have made out their Pretensions, in the most remarkable and astonishing manner, to the utter confusion of all their Enemies. First *the Glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation*; and then *Moses*, at God's Command, charges the Congregation to depart from the Tabernacles of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and declares, *Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works: for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visi-*

tation of all men ; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit ; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them : And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them : and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them, fled at the cry of them : for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense, Num. xvi.

Thus Moses vindicated himself, and proved his Divine Mission and Authority in such a manner, as it was impossible but that the whole People of *Israel* must be convinced of it : They were very suspicious and jealous of him, tho' they had had so much experience of his Favour with God, and of all his mighty Works done in the midst of them : but when this dreadful Vengeance fell upon his Enemies, before the whole Congregation, who were met together on purpose to see whether God would declare himself for him ; when
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the Earth divided it self to swallow some of these Men, and a Fire from Heaven devoured others, there was not a Man of all the Congregation but must be an Eye-witness to this Judgment ; and there could be no Deceit nor Mistake in a thing of this nature : For Men may as well doubt, whether those whom they see live, are alive, as, whether those whom they see taken away by so terrible and so visible a death, are dead ; and unless they can know this, there can be no Knowledge nor Proof of any thing. They saw the Earth first divide it self, and then close it self again upon these wicked Men ; they saw them go down alive into the Pit ; they heard the Cry of them, and fled away for fear : and they saw besides a Fire from the Lord consume no fewer than Two hundred and fifty Men, and these the Men that offer'd Incense, in opposition to *Aaron* ; Princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, whose death was very remarkable, upon the account of their Persons, as well as for the Manner of it. So many Men of that Rank and Character being taken away at once, was a thing that would have been much observed, and strictly enquir'd into, if they had fallen by any other death : but their dying in this manner, was so wonderful, and so plain a declaration of the Divine Justice, that it could neither be unknown nor forgotten by any Man in the whole Congregation.

Yet their Discontents against *Moses* still continued; for He and *Aaron* were charged with *killing the people of the Lord*, ver. 41. and *the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron: and behold, the cloud covered the tabernacle of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord appeared.* And God's Wrath was so hot against the People, for their Subbornness and Disobedience, that notwithstanding the Intercession of *Moses* and *Aaron* in their behalf, a Plague from the Lord raged so much amongst them, that *they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah*, ver. 49. And there were, probably, many Families in every Tribe, which bore the marks of God's Displeasure, and of the Truth of *Moses* his Mission: and then *Aaron's* Rod alone blossom'd, of all the Rods of the Twelve Tribes; but by this time the People were weary of their contumacy, and cried out, *Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish: Shall we be consumed with dying?* Num. xvii. 12, 13. And thus was an end put to a Sedition, which was the greatest and the most dangerous, as *Josephus* well observes, that was ever known among any People; and such, as that so dreadful a succession of Miracles was necessary to deliver *Moses* out of it. And I would know of the greatest Infidel, whether, if he had lived at that time, and had been in the Wilderness with *Moses*, and had been of *Korah's*

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Conspiracy, (as it is most likely he would have been,) I would know of him, I say, whether he could have done any thing more, to put *Moses* upon the utmost tryal of his Power and Authority received from God, than these rebellious *Israelites* did? And if he could not, (as he must needs confess he could not) then he ought to be satisfied in the Authority of *Moses*, as they themselves afterwards were, unless he has an ambition to shew, that some *Christians* can be more refractory than *Jews*.

Yet again, when they wanted Water, the People quarell'd with *Moses*, and said, *Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord.* And *Moses* brought Water out of the Rock, before the whole Congregation, in so great plenty, that the whole People and their Cattle, just ready to perish with thirst, was satisfied with it, Num. xx. 3, 10. At another time, after a signal Victory over the *Canaanites*, they made the same Complaints again; and for their Murmurings, were stung by fiery Serpents, and many died; till a Brazen Serpent being erected, as many as looked on it, were miraculously cured, Num. xxi. 6.

And if the delivering the Law in so conspicuous and wonderful a manner; if so remarkable Judgments upon those that questioned and opposed *Moses* his Authority, and that transgressed his Law, by committing Idolatry; if a continual course of Miracles, for

Forty

Forty Years, done before the eyes, and obvious to every sense of so many thousands of People, be not a plain demonstration, that the Matter of Fact, in all the circumstances of it necessary to prove *Moses* to have acted by God's immediate Authority and Commission, was at first sufficiently attested; it is impossible that any thing can be certainly testified.

We see how impossible it was for *Moses* to impose upon the People of *Israel* in things of this nature; if he could have been so far forsaken of all Reason and common Sense, as to hope to do it. But if he had designed to put any deceit upon them, he would certainly have taken another course; he would have done his Miracles privately, and but seldom, not in the midst of all the People, for Forty Years together: he would never have made two Nations, at the first, Witnesses to them; and then have proceeded in such a manner, as that every Man among the *Israelites* must have known them to be false, if they had been so: he would have chosen such Instances to shew his Miracles in, as should have provoked no body; not such as must have enraged the whole People against him, by the death of so many thousands, so often put to death, if they had been slain by any other means than by the Almighty Hand of God. And indeed, what could destroy so many, so irresistibly, so suddenly and visibly, but the Divine Power?
And

And what could be the Design and Intent of such Miracles, but to fulfil the Will of God, and make his Power to be known, and his Authority acknowledged, in the Laws which were delivered in his Name, and which were so often affronted and transgressed by these Sinners, against their own Souls? At their going out of *Ægypt*, by a miraculous Providence, there was *not one feeble person among their tribes*; but upon their transgressions, they were punished by Diseases as miraculous.

We have other Evidence (as I have before observed) that *Moses* had no design to delude the People of *Israel*, from the Meekness of his Disposition, from his discovering his own Faults and Infirmities in his Writings, and from his not advancing his Family, but leaving his Posterity in a private condition, and putting the Government into the hands of *Joshua*, one of the Tribe of *Ephraim*. But when all the People of *Israel* were Witnesses to so many Miracles wrought by him, and particularly to so strange a Judgment as the cleaving asunder of the Earth, and the Fire and Plague by which so many thousands perished; we need not insist upon any other Proof to shew that the Miraculous Power and Divine Authority by which *Moses* acted and wrote, was as well attested, and as fully known to the whole People of *Israel*, as it is possible for any Matter of Fact to be known to any single Person.

2. Having

2. Having shewn, That the Matters of Fact and Miracles contained in the Books of *Moses*, as they are related to have been done, were at first sufficiently attested; and that, if we may credit that Relation, all the Miracles there mention'd were certainly wrought by him; since they are of that nature, that the People of *Israel* could not be deceived in them: I now proceed to shew, That the Relations there set down, are a true Account of those things, and such as we may depend upon. For if these Matters of Fact or Miracles are either feigned or falsified, this must be done either in *Moses's* his time, or afterwards; and if in his time, then either by *Moses* and *Aaron*, with others who were concerned in carrying on the Design, or by the whole People of *Israel* together. And if it were done after *Moses* his death, then again it must be done either by some particular Man, or by the contrivance of some few or more together; or it must have been by the joint Knowledge and Consent of the whole Nation. I will therefore prove, (1.) That the Miracles could not be feigned by *Moses* and *Aaron*, and others concerned with them in carrying on such a Design. (2.) The Miracles could not be feigned, nor the Books of *Moses* invented or falsified by any particular Man, or by any Confederacy or Combination of Men, after the death of *Moses*. (3.) The Miracles could not be feigned, nor the Books invented or falsified

fified by the joint Consent of the whole Nation, either in *Moses's* time, or after it.

1. These Things could not be feigned by *Moses* and *Aaron*, and others concerned with them in carrying on such a Design. It is plain, that they could never invent such an Account as that of their miraculous Escape out of *Ægypt*, and their Travelling in the Wilderness, under the conduct and support of the same miraculous Power, and then impose it upon the People of *Israel* for Truth. For the People are supposed to be chiefly concerned in the whole Relation. *Moses* appeals to their own sense and experience; *The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even with us, who are all of us here alive this day, Deut. v. 3. And know you this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red-sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day; and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben; how the earth opened her mouth and swal-*

swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all their substance that was in their possession in the midst of all Israel. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did, Deut. xi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Here is a Recapitulation of all the Miracles that had been wrought, with an Appeal to their Senses for the Truth of them: And *Moses* would never have made such Appeals as these, if they could possibly have disproved him; they could never be persuaded that they came out of *Ægypt*, after so many Plagues inflicted upon the *Ægyptians*, to procure their Deliverance, if there had been no such thing, or that they were so long time in the Wilderness, and that so many and so great Miracles were wrought in their sight, if they had never been done before them. Though Men may, perhaps, be persuaded to believe, that their Ancestors, a long time ago, saw and heard things which they never saw nor heard, yet a whole Nation was never supposed to have been persuaded out of their Senses at once: and *Moses* could not attempt to make so many Men believe what they must all have known to have been false, as well as himself, if it had been so; but he would have laid the Scene at a greater distance of time, and not have brought those in as chiefly concerned in the whole business, who were then alive and present to convince him of falshood: And therefore, if the Particulars set down in the *Pentateuch* be false, and

and as ancient as *Moses* his time, they must be invented with the knowledge, and received by the consent of the whole Nation. For *Moses* and *Aaron* could never so far delude so many thousands, as to make them believe such variety of Matter of Fact, in so many and so wonderful Instances set forth, and with such notorious Circumstances, and appeal to the Senses of those whom they deceived, whether they had not seen and perceived, and had the experience of what had been done for so many years, if it had been all but Fiction.

2. The Miracles could not be feigned, nor the Books of *Moses* invented or falsified by any particular Man, or by any confederacy or combination of Men, after the death of *Moses*. If the Miracles were feigned after the death of *Moses*, either the Laws must likewise be invented or altered after his death, and the Miracles inserted to procure them Authority; or the Laws remained as they had been delivered by him, and the Miracles only were added. For the Books of *Moses* may be considered either as containing the Laws delivered by him, or as relating the Miracles by which these Laws were ratified and established; in each of which respects there could be no Forgery or Falsification. For,

1. The Laws themselves could not be invented, nor altered or falsified: because the whole Jewish State and Policy was founded upon them, and could not subsist without them;

them ; and therefore they must be as ancient as the Jewish Government, which is confess'd on all hands to have been first erected by *Moses*. For not only their Religious Worship, but their Civil Rights and Interests, depended entirely upon the Laws of *Moses* ; their Publick Proceedings, and their Private Dealings one with another, were all to be regulated and governed by these Laws : and when any Laws are brought into constant use and practice in any Nation, it is ridiculous to imagine that they can be altered and falsified, and a new System of Laws introduced instead of them, without the knowledge of the People governed by them, or any remembrances of it left amongst them. No material Alterations can be made in Laws which are of continual use, and which concern every Man's Interest, but they must be taken notice of and discovered by such as shall find themselves aggrieved by such Alterations. But this was less practicable amongst the *Jews*, than amongst any other People.

1. Because the Distinction of their Tribes, and the Genealogies which were kept of every Family, made them have a more separate and distinct Interest in every Tribe, and a more exact Account of Times and perfect Knowledge of Things in every Family ; and therefore they were not so capable of being imposed upon in things of this nature, as the People of other Nations might be, where
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Marriages and Inheritances are promiscuous, and no occasion is given for the like emulation and watchfulness over one another, and where no such Remembrances and Notices of the Transactions of Affairs are to be consulted by any one of every private Family : *In the wilderness of Sinai, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, Moses and Aaron assembled all the congregation together, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of their names, from twenty years old and upward, by their poll, Num. i. 1, 18.* and this was done again in the *Plains of Moab*, at the end of Forty Years, *chap. xxvi.* And these Genealogies were preserved, not only during the Captivity, *Ezra vii.* and down to the Reign of *Herod*, but even to the time of *Josephus*, who (in his First Book against *Apion*) says, That they had the Genealogies of their Priests then still extant for Two thousand Years.

By which means it came to pass, that every Tribe had a kind of separate Interest ; which was the occasion of *Korah's* Sedition against *Moses*. And every Man amongst their Tribes might certainly hereby know how many Generations he was removed from those who first took possession of *the Land of Promise* ; and might find the Names of his Ancestors registred, who were in the Wilderness with *Moses*, or came with *Joshua* over *Jordan* :

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And

And this must make the memory of their Ancestors more dear and familiar to them ; and it must make them have a greater regard for any thing they had left behind them, especially for a Book upon which their Rights of Inheritance, and the Title they had to all they enjoyed, depended : This was the Deed, by which they held their Estates ; and the Last Will and Testament, as it were, of their Ancestors, amongst whom the Land was divided. But it is certain, Men are more careful of nothing, than of the Writings by which they enjoy their Estates ; and there is no great danger, when a Will is once come to the hands of the right Heir, that it will be lost or falsified, to his prejudice : but if the Books of *Moses* were altered, it must be upon the account of some advantage to such as must be supposed to make the Alterations ; and consequently to the disadvantage of others, who therefore would have found themselves concerned to oppose such Alterations. But as the Books of *Moses* were in the nature of a Deed of Settlement, to every Tribe and Family ; so they were a Law too, which all were obliged to know and observe, under the severest Penalties : And being so generally known, and universally practised, it could no more be falsified at any time since its first Promulgation, than it could be now at this day. For,

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2. Another thing which made the People of *Israel* less capable of being imposed upon in this matter, was, That they were by their Laws themselves obliged to the constant study of them ; they were to teach them their Children, and to be continually discoursing and meditating on them ; to *bind them for a sign upon their hand, that they might be as frontlets between their eyes ; to teach them their children, speaking of them when they sate in their houses, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up ; to write them upon the door-posts of their houses, and upon their gates, Deut. xi. 18, 19, 20.* Nothing was to be more notorious and familiar to them, and accordingly they were perfectly acquainted with them, and (as *Josephus* says) knew them as well as they did their own Names ; they had them constantly in their mouths, and thousands have died in defence of them, and could by no Menaces or Torments be brought to forsake or renounce them. And to this end, One Day in Seven was by *Moses's* his Law set apart for the learning and understanding of it. The *Jews* have a Tradition, That *Moses* appointed the Law to be read thrice every Year in their publick Assemblies : And *Grotius* (q) is of this opinion. However, the Scripture informs us, that *Moses, of old time, had in every city them that preached him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day, Act. xv. 21.* It is

(q) *Grot. ad Matth. xv. 2.*

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is indeed the common opinion, That there were no Synagogues before the Captivity: But then, by *Synagogues*, must be understood Places of Judicature, rather than of Divine Worship: for there is no reason to question but the *Jews* had their *Proseucha's*, or Places of Prayer from the Beginning; since it is incredible, that those who lived at a great distance, and could not come to *Jerusalem* on the *Sabbath-days*, and other times of Divine Worship, (besides the three great Festivals, when all their Males were bound to be at *Jerusalem*) should not assemble for the Worship of God in the places where they dwelt; nay, they were by an express Law obliged to it on the *Sabbaths*: *The seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings*, Lev. xxiii. 3. They must therefore have Places in all their Dwellings to resort to, where they held their Convocations or Assemblies; and these they went to on the *New Moons*, as well as on the *Sabbaths*, 2 *King*. iv. 23. which made the Psalmist lament, that the Enemy had burnt up all the *synagogues of God in the land*, Psa. lxxiv. 8. And being met together, there is as little doubt to be made but that they read the Law; which was to be read by them in their Families, and much more in their Publick Assemblies, on their solemn Days of Divine Worship. The Books of
Moses

Moses therefore were read in their Synagogues, in every City, ἐν γενεῶν ἀρχαῖων, from ancient Generations, or from the first settlement of the *Children of Israel* in the Land of *Canaan*.

And then at the end of every Seven Years the Law was read in the most publick and solemn manner, in the Solemnity of the *Year of Release*, in the *Feast of Tabernacles*. *Moses* wrote a Book of the Law, and commanded it to be put in the side of the Ark, Deut. xxxi. 26. as the Two Tables of Stone were put into the Ark it self, chap. x. 5. and this he delivered to the Priests, and to all the Elders of *Israel*, and commanded them, saying, *At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose: thou shalt read this law before all Israel, in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children which have not known any thing, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it*, Deut. xxxi. 10, 11, 12, 13. How is it possible that any more effectual care could have been taken to secure a Law from being depraved and altered by Impostures? Every seventh Day, at least, was

set apart for the reading and learning it, in their several Tribes, throughout all the Land; and then once in seven years it was read at a publick and solemn Feast, when they were all obliged to go up to *Jerusalem*. And for this purpose, *Moses* wrote a Book of the Law, which was put in the side of the Ark, that it might be there for a Testimony against them, if they should transgress it, much more, if they should make any Alterations in it. And out of this Book the King was to write him a Copy of the Law, *Deut. xvii. 18.* and this Book of the Law was found by *Hilkiah* the High-Priest, in the House of the Lord, *2 Chron. xxxiv. 14. 2 King. xxii. 8.* For after all that the wicked and idolatrous Kings could do to suppress the Law of *Moses*, and draw aside the People to Idolatry, the Authentick Book of the Law, written by *Moses* himself, was still preserved in *Josiah's* time, besides the several Copies which must be dispersed throughout the Land, for the use of their Synagogues, and those which must be remaining in the hands of the Prophets, and other pious Men. And there is little reason to doubt, but that this very Book written by *Moses*, was preserved during the Captivity, and was that Book which *Ezra* read to the People. It is by no means credible, that the Prophets would suffer that Book to be lost, much less that they would suffer all the Copies generally to be lost or corrupted; which indeed, considering the

the number, was hardly possible. Is it probable that *Jeremiah* would use that favour which he had with *Nebuchadnezzar* to any other purpose, rather than for the preservation of the Book of the Law? The *Jews* say the Ark was secured, in the burning of the Temple, at the time of their Captivity: but it is much more probable that the Book of their Law was secured, it being both more easily conveyed away, and not so tempting a Prey to the Enemy. We find the Law cited in the time of the Captivity, by *Daniel*, *Dan. ix. 11.* by *Nehemiah*, *Nehem. i. 8, 9.* and in *Tobit*, who belong'd to the Ten Tribes, *Tob. vi. 12. & vii. 13.* And it is not to be doubted, but that these and other pious Men had Copies of it by them, and were very careful to preserve them. *Maimonides* (r) says, that *Moses* himself wrote out (r) *Huet. Demor. str. Prop. 41.* Twelve Books of the Law, one for each Tribe, besides that which was laid up in the side of the Ark; and the Rabbins teach, that every one is obliged to have a Copy of the *Pentateuch* by him: And *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* (s) are (s) *Drus. de Trib. Sect. 1. 3. c. 11.* said to have brought Three hundred Books of the Law into the Congregation assembled at their return from Captivity. It is certain there were Scribes of the Law, before the Captivity, and in the time of it, *Jer. viii. 8.* *Ezra* is stiled a ready Scribe in the law of *Moses*; and the Scribe, even a Scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to *Israel*: And by *Artaxerxes*, in his Letter, he

is called *a Scribe of the law of the God of heaven*, Ezra vii. 6, 11, 12. By which it appears, that there were Scribes of the Law during the Captivity, who were known by this solemn Stile and Character, and whose care and employment it was to study and write over the Law, of whom *Ezra* was the principal at the time of their Return. It is most probable then, that the Book of the Law was preserved in *Moses's* own Hand, till the coming of the *Jews* from *Babylon*; besides the Copies that were preserved in the hands of *Daniel*, *Nehemiah*, *Ezra*, *Zechariah*, and the other Prophets, who were not only of unquestionable Integrity, but wrote themselves by Divine Inspiration.

3. Nothing is more expressly forbidden in the Books of *Moses*, than all Fraud and Deceit; and it cannot reasonably be suspected that any Man would be guilty of a Fraud of the highest nature imaginable, to introduce or establish a Law that forbids it. *Moses* had forewarned them against all such Practices, both in his Laws in general, and by an express Prohibition: *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it*, Deut. iv. 2. And all who had any regard to the Observation of his Laws, would observe this, as well as other parts of it; for this preserved the Authority of all the rest inviolable: And if they had had no regard to the Law, but had altered it as they pleased, they would certainly have made such Alterations as would have

have gratified the People, and would have taken great care to leave nothing which might give offence; but the Laws of *Moses* are such, as that without a Divine Authority to enforce them, they would never have been complied with, but would have been grievous to a less suspicious and impatient People than the *Jews* were. If it be said, That the Prohibition against Alterations might be added amongst other things; there is no ground of probability for it, but so much odds against it, that a Man might as well suspect that the whole Five Books had been forged, as to pitch upon that particular Verie, and say that it is not genuine. Besides, why should Impostors insert such a Clause as would hinder them from changing any thing in the Law ever after? Why should they not rather reserve to themselves a liberty of changing and adding as often as they thought fit?

2. As the Laws themselves could not be invented nor altered, after *Moses's* time; so neither could the Account or the Miracles wrought by him, be inserted after his death, by any particular Man, nor by any Confederacy or Combination of Men whatsoever. For if the Miracles, by which the Law is supposed to be confirmed, were afterwards inserted, they must be intended as a Sanction, to give Authority to it, and keep the People in awe, when they were become uneasy and disobedient under the Government of those Laws.

But

But it must needs be much more difficult to introduce Laws at first, than to govern a People by them, after they have been once introduced, and are settled and received amongst them. Indeed, it is incredible, how Laws, so little favourable to the ease or advantage of a People which were so expensive and burthensome in their Ceremonies, and which were purposely designed, in many things, to be contrary to the Customs of all the Nations round about them, and to the Customs which they had been themselves acquainted with in *Ægypt*, in so many Instances, could be at first introduced, but by Miracle: but if they could have been once introduced without Miracles, there is no reason to think, but that when the People were used and accustom'd to them, there would have been no need of any pretence of Miracles, to keep them in obedience to them; and as little reason there is to imagine that they would have been over-awed by a Report of Miracles, which must be supposed never to have been heard of, till the People gave occasion for the Invention of them, by their Disobedience.

The Books of *Moses* were read (as I have shewn) in the Synagogues, or Religious Assemblies, in the several Tribes, at least every *Sabbath-day*, and were appointed to be solemnly read, in the audience of all the People, at the *Feast of Tabernacles*, every Seven Years: and if they had had no knowledge of the Laws

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of *Moses*, but from the Rehearsal of it at the *Feast of Tabernacles*; yet can we conceive that the Body of the Jewish Nation should be so stupid and forgetful, as not to remember when these Miracles must be supposed to be first read to them, that they had never heard them before? But how impossible is it, that they should be thus imposed upon, when they heard the Books of *Moses* read every Week to them, and had them besides in their own keeping, to read them at their leisure? The Miracles now make up great part of the Books of *Moses*; they are every where interspersed and intermix'd, throughout the History; and they are of such a nature, as is most apt to make impression upon the Memories of Men: And can we imagine, that Miracles, so often repeated, and every where inculcated, could be inserted by any contrivance, and imposed upon a People who were all wont to hear the Law publickly read in a solemn Assembly once every Seven Years, and heard it read in their Synagogues besides every Seventh Day? Would they not be infinitely surpris'd, the first time they heard the Relation of the Plagues inflicted on the *Ægyptians*, of the Judgment upon *Korah* and his Company, and of the miraculous Punishments which befell the Idolatrous and Disobedient in the Wilderness? Would they not soon have found out so obvious a Deceit as this must have been, if it had been one? If we can think that such Insertions could pass without discovery;

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very ; why may we not as well believe too, that as many more might be made now, and not be discovered? Would not the whole Body of the People have been able to testify that all this was counterfeited, and inserted into the Law ; for no such thing was read to them in their Synagogues upon the *Sabbaths*, nor had been read at the end of the last Seven Years, but it was all now added to terrify them, and keep them from following the Customs of other Nations? Would not this have been the worst contrivance that could have been thought of, to keep a People in awe, to tell them of such things as every Man of them could disprove, that was of Age, and had but Understanding and Memory enough to know what he had heard so often read before, and to distinguish it from such things as are so remarkable, that they could hardly escape any one's Memory, who had ever heard of them?

They had Books of the Law for their private reading ; and besides the reading of it in their Weekly Assemblies, they had a solemn Publication and Proclamation of their Law once every Seven Years, as it were purposely to prevent any Design of falsifying it : And to have read any thing so remarkable, as the Miracles of *Moses* are, in all their circumstances, so often repeated and insisted upon, if the People had not found them in their own Books, and had not been used to hear them read to them, from the time of the giving the
Law

Law by *Moses*, had been only for the Projectors to proclaim themselves Impostors, but could never have deceived any Man.

And besides the care that was taken for the Preservation of the Books of the Law, there were publick Memorials of the principal Miracles enjoined ; such was the *Feast of the Passover*, in remembrance of the Angel's passing over the *Israelites*, when he slew the First-born of the *Ægyptians* ; and the *Feast of Tabernacles*, in remembrance of their dwelling in Tents in the Wilderness ; and such were the *Brazen Serpent*, the *Ark*, and the *Tabernacle* : These were things seen and observed, or known by all ; and they could not be introduced after *Moses's* time, because there could be no pretence for it ; since they who introduced them, must suppose them to have been before, at the very time when they designed first to introduce them. The *Urim and Thummim* was both a constant Miracle, and a constant Attestation to the Law, by which it was ordained. And it appears, that the Priests who were to examine and judge of Leprosie either in Persons or Things, were secured from the Infection of it, though it were infectious to all others : And their constant Service could not be performed without a
(t) miraculous Dispensation.

Thus it is evident, That there is all the Proof which it is possible to bring in any case of this nature, that the Books of *Moses* could
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(t) Vid. Lightfoot's Prospect of the Temple, c. 34. p. 2050.

not be falsified by any Man, or Party of Men whatsoever; since the Nature and Institution of the Law it self did effectually provide against all Impostures; and the *Jews* had all the assurance that it is possible for any People to have, that the Books of *Moses* are the same which he wrote and left behind him. And this inspired them with such a zeal for their Law, as to sacrifice their Lives in vindication of it; whereas there was no Book whatsoever, as *Josephus* observes, amongst the *Heathens*, which any Man amongst them would not rather a thousand times see destroyed, though it were in never so much esteem with them, than he would suffer for it: Which shews, that the *Jews* were fully convinced of the Divine Authority of their Law, from all the Evidence above-mentioned; and were persuaded, that it is the same which *Moses* delivered, and left behind him.

3. The *Pentateuch* could not be invented nor falsified by the joint Consent of the whole Nation, either in *Moses's* time, or after it. For how is it possible that such a thing should have been concealed from all other Nations? and, that a whole Nation should know of the Imposture, and no Man ever discover it, nor no Apostate ever divulge it, but they and their Posterity should always profess, that they believed the Law to be revealed to *Moses* by God himself, just as we now have it in the *Pentateuch*? that under all Afflictions and Adversities, they should

should impute their Sufferings to the violation of the Law; and that so many should die, rather than depart from it?

Upon the Revolt of the Ten Tribes, *Fero-boam* would certainly have discover'd it, if he had but suspected any such thing as an Imposture, or could but have hoped to make the People believe that the Laws of *Moses* were not of Divine Institution, but of Humane Invention and Contrivance: but he supposed the Truth of its Divine Original, whilst he tempted the People to the transgression of it; *Behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Ægypt*, 1 King. xii. 28. he supposes them brought out of the Land of *Ægypt*, and brought out by a Divine Power; and endeavours to persuade them, that the two *Calves* which he had set up in *Dan* and *Bethel*, were the Gods who delivered them, and by whose Authority the Law was given them; and that therefore either of those Places was as proper to sacrifice in, as *Jerusalem*: which however absurd it were, yet he did not think so absurd, as to endeavour to make them believe that their Law it self was no better than an Imposture: he had some hopes to succeed in this Project; and the Event shews, he understood the Temper and Principles of the People he had to deal with; but the other was too gross for him to attempt. The true Prophets of *Israel* were ever as zealous for the Law of *Moses*, as the Prophets of *Judah*, and the False
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Prophets of either Kingdom, never durst deny its Authority: these False Prophets affronted and contradicted the Prophets of the Lord, but they ever owned the Law, and pretended to speak in the Name of that God who had deliver'd it to *Moses*. And this Division of the Ten Tribes made it impossible afterwards for either the Kingdom of *Israel*, or of *Judah*, to make any Alterations in the Books of *Moses*; because there was so great emulation and enmities betwixt the two Kingdoms, that they could never have agreed to insert the same Corruptions; and if either of them had attempted such a thing, it would soon have been discovered by the other; and therefore the agreement of the *Samaritan* with the *Hebrew Pentateuch*, is a plain argument that they are but different Copies of the same Book, and that it is undoubtedly genuine. The *Children of Israel*, notwithstanding their great proneness to Idolatry, never cast off the Law of *Moses*, as they would certainly have done, being so often brought into bondage by their neighbour-Nations, if they had not been well assured of the Authority of that Law which they transgress'd; but they were reduced to the Obedience of the Law, by the Oppressions of Idolatrous Nations; they hoped for Deliverance upon their Repentance, according to the Promises made in it, and could by no Temptations or Torments be persuaded or forced to renounce it: But the long Captivity in *Ba-*
bylon

Bylon wrought a perfect cure in the *Jews*, as to their inclination to Idolatry; which could never have been, unless by their own experience, in seeing the Prophecies fulfilled, and by other Arguments, they had been fully convinced of the Truth of their own Religion beyond all others.

If it had been of their own Invention, the People would have made their Law, in every respect, more favourable to themselves; they would not have cloyed it with burthensome Ceremonies, to distinguish themselves from the neighbour-Nations, whose Idolatries they were so long prone to, and which these Ceremonies were designed to restrain them from. They who were for a long time so fond of the Idolatries of the *Heathen*, would never have invented Laws so uneasy to themselves, and so contrary and odious to other Nations; they would never have framed them themselves, and then have pretended a Divine Revelation for those Laws which they were so little pleased with. They would never have exposed themselves to the whole World, through all Ages, as a stubborn and rebellious People, notwithstanding so many and so convincing Miracles so long wrought amongst them. The Miracles which I have mention'd, were most of them Judgments upon the *Israelites*, for their Disobedience; and they would never have set down these Miracles, but would rather have left them out, though they were
D true,

true, as disgraceful to their Nation. For thus *Josephus* has omitted some things, to avoid the Scandal which, he was aware, would have been given to the *Heathen*, by a full and punctual Relation of the whole History of the *Jews*, as it is described in the Books of *Moses*. And they could be as little ignorant as *Josephus*, what would prove disgraceful to them, and what would make for their Honour and Renown; and when the design of these supposed Forgeries and Falsifications must have been to advance the Glory of the People of *Israel*, they would never have made such as these. No, if they had made any Alterations, it would have been, to strike out those numerous Passages which are so reproachful to their Nation, and to have inserted others, which might raise the Fame and Glory of Themselves, and of their Ancestors; and to have changed those Ceremonies that were so burthenome and so singular, for those which would have been more easie to themselves, and might have recommended them to the good opinion and esteem of the neighbour Nations. But when so refractory a People became so zealous for such a Law, so uneasie at first, and so distastful to them; it is an undeniable argument, that they had the greatest Assurance of its Divine Original, and that they would neither falsifie it themselves, nor suffer others to falsifie it.

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The People of *Israel* must be supposed to be unanimous to a Man, in the making these Laws, if they were of their own making; for if any one had dissented, he could not fail of Arguments to draw others after him. In making Laws, the Interests and Conveniencies of the Law-makers are always the Motives for the enacting them; and besides the Publick Honour and Welfare of the Nation, which too often are less considered, the particular Interest of every single Man would have made him concerned to put a stop to such Laws. No People can be supposed to consent to the making Laws, by which they are forbidden to sow their Land every Seventh Year, and are commanded to leave their Habitations, and go up to the capital City, from every part of their Countrey, thrice in a Year: no People could agree to enact such Laws of their own contrivance; because none could subsist in the observation of them, without a Miracle. How can we conceive it possible for any People to subsist by such Laws, if they had been of their own making? or, that any Nation should agree in the enacting such Laws as must provoke all their neighbour Nations to make War against them? nay, by which they actually declared an irreconcilable War against seven Nations at once? For one Nation to distinguish themselves, by their Laws and Constitutions, from all other People; to lay the very Foundations of their Govern-

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ment in the disgrace and infamy of all their neighbour Nations ; to report, that after so many loathsome and grievous Plagues, inflicted upon *Pharaoh* and his People, they came out of *Ægypt*, and at last, by the destruction of him and his whole Army in the *Red-Sea*, made their escape, and that they forced their way through all the other Nations that withstood their passage into *Canaan*, and vanquished and destroyed them as they went ; and then to proclaim a sacred War against all the Nations whose Land they were to possess, and many of whose Posterity were remaining in *Solomon's* time, and probably long after, and might have been able to confute great part of what the *Israelites* affirmed of themselves, if it had been false, and of a late invention : for any People, I say, to invent such Accounts of Themselves and their Ancestors, and then to make such Laws, and to have the one believed, and the other obeyed, is altogether incredible : When they had enraged all the neighbouring Nations to their destruction, they obliged themselves, by their Laws, to leave all their Borders naked, thrice every year, and to give them an opportunity to destroy them ; and no People could have lived half an Age, in such a condition, under such Laws, unless they had been protected by God himself, the Author of them.

It appears therefore, that as neither *Moses* himself, nor any Party of Men either in his time,

time, or after it, could either invent, or change and falsifie the Books which are under his Name ; so it is still more extravagant (if possible) to conceit, that the whole People of *Israel* should either in *Moses's* time, or afterwards, be conscious to such an Imposture ; and yet that no Man should ever discover it, but it should to this day be concealed from all other Nations ; and that neither at the time of the Division of the Ten Tribes, when *Jeroboam* was forced to set up Altars in other Places, to keep the People from going up to *Jerusalem* to worship, nor upon any other occasion, this Secret, if that may be called so, which must be known to so many thousands, should ever come to light. Besides that, they could never have invented those Laws, by unanimous consent amongst themselves, which they were so hardly brought to obey ; and if they had not been disobedient, they would never have pretended they were, and have invented Miracles to make it believed ; and if they had been never so forward in their obedience, they could not have lived in the observation of the Law, without a perpetual Miracle.

If then the Miracles of *Moses*, and consequently the Divine Authority by which he gave his Law to the *Israelites*, be sufficiently attested, supposing the Matters of Fact to be true, which are contained in the *Pentateuch* : and if neither *Moses* himself could feign the

Matters of Fact, nor any other Person or Persons either in his time or afterwards, could insert them, or change the Law ; and the whole Jewish Nation could not at any time conspire in such a Fiction and Imposture : We have all the Assurance that it is possible to have, and all that any sober Man can desire, both of the Truth of the Miracles wrought by *Moses*, and of the Divine Authority of the Books penn'd by him. And it will be found, that after all the Reflections made by Infidels, upon the Credulity, as they esteem it, of others, there are none so credulous as they ; for they reject the most certain, to believe the most incredible things in the World.

The Divine Mission and Authority of *Moses* being fully proved ; from thence it will follow, (1.) That God having instituted the Jewish Government, was in point both of Wisdom and Honour concerned in the administration of it, and that a more especial and peculiar Care and Providence must be watchful over this *holy Nation*, and *peculiar People*. (2.) That whatever befell them, either by Prophecies or by Miracles, and the extraordinary Appointments of God, according to the Revelations made in the Law of *Moses*, has, besides its own proper and intrinsic Evidence, the additional Proof of all the Miracles and Prophecies of *Moses*. So that the Proof of the Divine Authority of *Moses* his Books, is at the same time a Proof of all the other

other Books of Scripture, so far as they are in the Matter and Subject of them consequent to these. (3.) That the *Pentateuch*, and the other Parts of the *Old Testament* (not to mention the *New Testament* in this place) reciprocally prove each other, like the Cause and the Effect ; the *Pentateuch* being the Cause and Foundation of These ; and These the Effect and the Consequence of the *Pentateuch*, and the Fulfilling the several Predictions of it.

C H A P . VII.

Of Joshua, and the Judges, and of the Miracles and Prophecies under their Government.

IT is generally agreed, that *Joshua* himself was the Author of the Book under his Name ; and some who are of another opinion, yet acknowledge that it must be written by his particular Order, in his life-time, or soon after his death. The nature of the thing itself required, that the Division of the Land of *Canaan* amongst the several Tribes, should forthwith be committed to Writing : for no People can be named, who had the use of Letters, that trusted the Boundaries of their Lands to Memory ; and there is no delay to be used in such cases : *Joshua* therefore, who did by

Lot set out the Bounds of the Tribes, at the same time put them down in Writing; which he left upon Record to Posterity, to prevent Disputes, and to be appealed to, in case any Controversie should arise. But the bare Distribution of the Land was not to be transmitted, without an Account of the miraculous Conquests of it, which might dispose them to be contented with their several Lots, and remind them of their Duty, in the possession and enjoyment of a Land which they were settled in, by the immediate Hand of God. The *Book of Joshua* appears to have been written during the life-time of *Rahab*, *Jos. vi. 25.* and to have been written (in part at least) by *Joshua* himself, and annexed to the Law of *Moses*, chap. xxiv. 26. But the five last Verses, giving an Account of the Death of *Joshua*, and of what followed after it, were added by some of the Prophets, probably by *Samuel*, who, according to the Jewish Tradition, is the Author of the *Book of Judges*, where we find the same things repeated concerning the Death of *Joshua*, *Judg. ii. 7.* The *Book of Judges* is reckoned among the Books of the Prophets, *Mat. ii. 23. Judg. xiii. 5.* and it seems to be entitl'd to *Samuel*, *Act. iii. 24.* where *Samuel* is mention'd as the first of the Prophets, that is, the first Author of the Books written by them: That the *Book of Judges* was penn'd before the Taking of *Jerusalem* by *David*, we may learn from *Judg. i. 21.*

After

After the death of *Moses*, *Joshua* undertakes the Government and Conduct of the People of *Israel*, according to God's Appointment, and his Investiture to it by *Moses*, *Num. xxvii. 22.* who also foretold the great Success that afterwards attended him, *Deut. i. 38.* and at his first entrance upon the Government, God gave to him the same Divine Attestation that had before been given to *Moses*, in their Passage through the *Red-Sea*: *And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnifie thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee, Jos. iii. 7.* And for a certain Demonstration that the living God was among them, and would give them Victory over the Seven Nations, and Possession of their Land, the Priests did, by God's Appointment, bear the Ark before the People; and as soon as their Feet were dipt in the brim of the water, in the time of Harvest, when the River *Jordan* is at the highest, and overflows all its Banks, the Waters divided themselves; those above stood on one side in heaps, and those below were cut off and failed, the Priests standing with the Ark in the midst of the River, upon dry-ground, till all the People were passed over, and until every thing was finished that the Lord commanded *Joshua* to speak unto the people, according to all that *Moses* commanded *Joshua*, *Josh. iv. 10.*

Now, it is an undoubted Tradition among the Jews, (u) That the Tents of the *Israelites*

(u) *Lightf. Chorograph. Centur. c. 43. p. 46.*

in

in the Wilderness, contained a Square of Twelve Miles, and that the Host took up the same space, whilst they passed *Jordan*. However, this is certain, that they kept at the distance of about Two thousand Cubits from the Ark, when it stood in the midst of *Jordan*, Josh. iii. 4. so that the Waters must be withdrawn for many Miles in the passage of the whole Army over the River, if they passed it in a Regular March, and in such Order of Battel as to be able to oppose the Enemy; or if they marched in a narrower Body, they must be so much the longer in their passage: which way soever it were, it was a very great and manifest Miracle. The People being all gone over, and every thing performed which God had commanded, the Priests with the Ark came out of the Channel of the River, where they had all this while stood, and as soon as their feet were lift up unto the dry land, beyond the Waters which stood then on an heap, and did not flow down as at other times, they resumed their course, and returned to their place, and flowed over all the banks as they did before, Josh. iv. 18. And as a Memorial of this Miracle to all Posterity, Twelve Stones were set up in the midst of *Jordan*, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood, ver. 8, 9. and Twelve Stones more were taken out of *Jordan*, whilst it was dry, by Twelve Men chosen out of the People, one out of every Tribe, and were pitched

pitched in *Gilgal*, ver. 20. Thus did the Lord magnifie *Joshua* in the sight of all *Israel*, and they feared him, as they feared *Moses*, all the days of his life, ver. 14. Here was a Miracle wrought in the most remarkable manner, which the whole People were Witnesses to, and effectual care was taken to keep up the Remembrance of it. The Waters of *Jordan* were cut off, for the passage of the Children of *Israel* into *Canaan*, as the Waters of the *Red-Sea* had been divided, to procure their escape out of *Ægypt*; and such an Experiment was not to have been made twice, if it had not been a true Miracle.

They were no sooner come into the promised Land, but all the Males were Circumcised, (that Rite having been omitted in the Wilderness) and were thereby disabled for War: which had been a strange Policy, for the Invaders of a Country to wound themselves, and render themselves unfit for fight, as soon as they arrived in the Coasts of the Enemy, if the *Canaanites* had not been restrained by a miraculous Awe and Power from setting upon them, as the Sons of *Jacob* did upon the *Shechemites*, Gen. xxxiv. before they were recovered of their foreness, after Circumcision.

The Walls of *Jericho* were thrown down, only by marching round it seven Days, and blowing with Trumpets; and this was accompanied with a Prophecy, That who-so-ever

ever should attempt to re-build *Jericho*, should lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son should he set up the gates of it, *Josh. vi. 26.* which was fulfilled in the Reign of *Abab*, when *Hiel* the *Beth-elite* lost his eldest Son *Abiram*, upon his laying the Foundation of it, and his youngest Son *Segub*, upon his setting up the Gates, *1 King. xvi. 34.* These Miracles, and the standing still of the Sun and Moon, whilst the *Israelites* pursued and vanquished their Enemies; and the prodigious Hail-stones cast down from Heaven, which slew more of them than the Sword could do; and a continued course of Victories, never interrupted but for *Achan's* Offence, struck such a mighty terrour into the *Canaanites*, that some of them sought out ways to make their peace with the *Israelites*, by submission, and others fled into foreign Countries. And to shew that they conquered by a miraculous and Divine Power, not by any carnal Force or Strength; *Joshua*, by God's Command, destroyed the Horses and the Chariots that he took from the Enemy, *Josh. xi. 9.* which had been a strange Action in Humane Policy, but by such unlikely means he subdued one and thirty Kings of the *Canaanites*, *chap. xii.* and then divided the Land, not yet conquered, amongst the Tribes of *Israel*, being as certain of it, as if they had it already in possession, *chap. xiii. 2, 7.*

Joshua, after so many Victories, and so many Miracles, when the Land of *Canaan* came
to

to be divided among the *Children of Israel*, took no more for his own Inheritance, than they were willing to spare him, after the Land had been divided among the Tribes, *ch. xix. 49.* and at last, as *Moses* had done, he appeals to their own Experience, and to their very Senses, for the Truth of all the Wonders and Deliverances, and the mighty Works which God had wrought amongst them, *chap. xxiv.*

After the Death of *Joshua*, God raised up *Judges* out of several Families and Tribes, with an immediate and extraordinary Commission to govern and protect his People: so that there could be no private Ends, or politick Designs carry'd on, under the pretence of a Divine Commission. But upon their Disobedience and Idolatries, they were, from time to time, punished with Slaughter and Captivity; and, upon their Repentance, were as constantly delivered; *Judges* being purposely raised up to be Conquerors and Deliverers, and never failing of success.

But besides these who were empowered by God, upon extraordinary Occasions, they had other *Judges*, or Chief Magistrates, to administer Justice, and to preside over the Publick Affairs, for the welfare of the People: such were *Eli* and *Samuel*. *Eli* was a great Example, how much Fondness, and Natural Affection, may prevail over good and wise Men: but he was more afflicted to hear that the Ark of God was taken, than at the death of both his Sons;
that

that gave him his mortal Wound, and he could not out-live the Hearing it, 1 Sam. iv. 18. Samuel's Sons were wicked, as well as Eli's, and he doth not conceal their faults, but plainly says, That they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment, chap. viii. 3. but he appeals to the whole People for his own Integrity, who solemnly declare him free from any Oppression or Injustice. He resigned the Government, though he had the Power in his hands to appoint two Kings successively, and by Gods Commandment raised both Saul and David out of their obscurity to a Throne. Samuel says plainly, That when the Elders of Israel came to him to ask a King, the thing displeased him, 1 Sam. viii. 6. and he who could make Two Kings of Two different Tribes, and of no Interest in their respective Tribes, might as well have made himself King, if he had acted upon Humane Considerations, and by Humane Power and Means. The Divine Power therefore was visible in the Government of the Children of Israel, from the time of Moses and Joshua to Saul; for they were constantly governed by Persons of God's appointment; their Government was a Theocracy, being administered by God's immediate Direction, the Lord their God was their King, 1 Sam. xii. 12.

C H A P.

C H A P. VIII.

Of the People of Israel, under their Kings.

After a standing Regal Government was settled among the People of Israel, they were either happy or miserable at home, and either a Defeat or Victory attended their Armies abroad, as they proved obedient or disobedient to the Law of Moses, and to the Word of the Lord, delivered by his Prophets. Upon the Revolt of the Ten Tribes, when Two Tribes only remained in the obedience of Rehoboam, and in the true way of Worship, this had been the time, (as already has been said) if there had been any Imposture hitherto carried on, to discover it; for they had all the Temptation, and all the Opportunity to do it, that could possibly be given. But after the Division of the Ten Tribes, Jeroboam durst not so much as attempt to draw them off from an acknowledgment of the Divine Authority of that Law by which they were obliged to go up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, though he persuaded them to change the Place of their Worship, and to go no longer up thither. And God had his Prophets in Israel, who were as zealous for the Law, as the Prophets of Judah; for in both Kingdoms they had still Prophets to admonish them, and to direct them in all Matters of great importance. Tho' the Urim and Thummim,

Thummim, and the *Shechina*, were confined to the *Aaronical* Priesthood, and the Ark of the Testament; yet the other kinds of Prophecy were vouchsafed to *Israel*, as well as *Judah*: and the Captivity both of *Judah* and *Israel* by the *Assyrians*, and the Deliverance of the *Jews* out of it, befell them according to express Prophecies; and both during the Captivity, and at their Return, they had *Daniel*, *Zechariah*, *Malachi*, and other Prophets amongst them; and for so many Ages, from their first coming out of *Aegypt*, the whole People were made continually Witnesses of the manifest Power and Presence of God amongst them. This will be evident, by making some Observations concerning the Prophets and their Writings, and concerning their Prophecies and Miracles.

C H A P. IX.

Of the Prophets, and their Writings.

THe kinds of Prophecy among the *Jews*, were, (1.) The *Shechina*. (2.) The *Urim and Thummim*. (3.) Revelation by Visions and Dreams, or by Inspiration; for I shall not here distinguish these ways of Revelation, to consider them apart. And when these kinds of Prophecy ceased under the Second Temple, the *Bath Kol*, or Voice from Heaven, was the only way of Revelation: but of this there is little or nothing certain to be relyed upon.

1. The

1. The *Shechina*, was the sitting, or dwelling of God between the Cherubims, on the Mercy-Seat or Cover of the Ark, *Psal.* lxxxii. 1. & xcix. 1. from whence he gave out his Answers by an Articulate Voice, *Exod.* xxv. 22. & xxix. 42. *Num.* vii. 89.

2. The *Urim and Thummim* upon the Breast-plate of the High-Priest, *Exod.* xxviii. 30. was another standing Oracle, to be consulted upon all great occasions, *Num.* xxvii. 21. *I Sam.* xxviii. 6. xxiii. 9. xxx. 7. *Ezra* ii. 63. and the Answers were returned by a visible signification of the Divine Will: and this Oracle was not only venerable amongst the *Jews*, but was famous amongst the *Heathen* (as *Josephus* assures us) for its infallible Answers. Mr. *Mede* (x) thinks *Urim and Thummim* to have been in use among the Patriarchs, before the Law was given; because the making of it is not spoken of amongst the other things of the *Ephod*. The common opinion is, that this Oracle was delivered by the shining of such Letters of the Tribes Names, engraven on the Priest's Breast-plate, as express'd the Answer: but the same learned Author thinks, that the *Urim* and the *Thummim* were distinct Oracles; the *Thummim* shewing when their Sacrifices were accepted; and the *Urim* answering such Questions as were proposed upon any important occasion.

3. Revelations by Visions and Dreams, or by Inspiration, were the Revelations which properly denominated those, to whom they were made Prophets. For the Prophets were Persons sent

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by

(x) *Mede's*
Discourse
35.

by God, with an extraordinary Commission, to declare his Will; and they were not confined to the Tribe of *Levi*, or to any one particular Tribe, but sometimes taken out of one Tribe, and sometimes out of another: for tho' the *Jews* had Colleges and Schools to prepare and qualify Men, by a vertuous and religious Education, for Divine Illuminations; yet divers others, who had not been educated in this manner, were endued with the Spirit of Prophecy; and some of them were but of very mean Employments, and others again of Royal Blood.

They reprov'd both their Kings and their Priests with a fearless and undaunted Freedom and Authority: and this Plain-dealing, such as became Men who spake and acted by a Divine Impulse, without Design, and without any Disguise, sometimes commanded great Reverence towards them from Princes, not easie to be well advis'd or directed. *Rehoboam*, a willful and rash Prince, at the head of an Army of an Hundred and fourscore thousand chosen Men, upon the Word of the Lord, delivered to him by *Shemaiah*, returned home without attempting any thing, to regain the Tribes that had revolted from him to *Jeroboam*, *1 King. xii. 21.* *Ahab*, though an exceeding wicked King, after a signal Victory, bore the reproof of a Prophet, who denounced a Judgment upon Him and his People, for letting *Ben-badad* go, and was much concerned at it, *1 King. xx. 42, 43.* and the same *Ahab* rent his Cloaths, and put on Sackcloth, and

and fasted, at the reproof of *Elijah*, *1 King. xxi. 27.* *Amaziah*, by the admonition of a Prophet, dismiss'd an *Hundred thousand mighty men of valour*, whom he had hired of the *Israelites* for an Hundred Talents, being content to lose so many Talents, and to want their help in the War, and to venture the ravage that such an Army, who look'd upon themselves as affronted, made in his Country; upon the Prophets assuring him, that God would give him the victory, if he would dismiss them, but not otherwise; and telling him, *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this:* and the Event proved the Truth of the Prediction, *2 Chron. xxv.* The *Children of Israel* likewise, at the word of *Oded* the Prophet, sent back Two hundred thousand Persons of the Kingdom of *Judah* with great spoil, which they had taken, *2 Chron. xxviii.* So ready and so general a Compliance, in such cases, could arise from nothing but a certain Belief and Experience of the Truth of what the Prophets delivered; but at other times they were despised and persecuted: And the Truth of their Prophecies was not only attested by Miracles, and justified by the Event, and confessed by the Deference and Respect both of the Kings and People; but it was asserted by their Sufferings, and sealed by the Blood of the Prophets, and was at last acknowledged by the Posterity of those who had slain them; they being most forward and zealous to adorn the Tombs of the Prophets, whom their Fore-fathers had killed; and to die, in vindication

dication of those Prophecies, for which they had been slain. There was a constant succession of Prophets, from the time of *Moses*, till the return of the *Jews* from their Captivity in *Babylon*: some prophesied for many Years; *Jeremiah*, for above One and forty Years; *Ezekiel*, about Twenty Years; the least time assigned to *Hosea's* Prophecy, is Forty three years; *Amos* prophesied about Six and twenty years; *Micha*, about Fifty; *Isaiah*, *Jonah*, and *Daniel*, a much longer time: so that they lived to see divers of their own Prophecies fulfilled; and to have suffered as False Prophets, if they had not come to pass. And though many Prophecies were not to be fulfilled, till long after the death of the Prophets who deliver'd them; yet they wrought Miracles, or they foretold some things, which came to pass soon after, according to their Predictions, to give evidence to their Authority, and confirm their Divine Mission.

The Prophets committed their Prophecies to writing, and left them to Posterity, *Isa. xxx. 8. Jer. xxx. 2. & xxxvi. 32. Hab. ii. 1, 2.* And the writing of the Histories of the *Jews* belong'd to the Prophets, *1 Chron. xxix. 29. 2 Chron. xii. 15. & xiii. 22. & xx. 34. & xxvi. 22. & xxxii. 32.* And both in their Prophetical and Historical Books they deal with the greatest plainness and sincerity; they record the Idolatries of the Nation, and foretell the Judgments of God which were to befall it upon that account; and they

leave

leave to Posterity a Relation of the Miscarriages and Crimes of their best Princes: *David*, *Solomon*, and others, who were Types of the *Messias*, and from whose Race they expected Him, and looked upon the Glories of their several Reigns to be Presages of His, are yet described not only without flattery, but without any reserve or extenuation. They write as Men who had no regard to any thing but Truth, and the Glory of God, in telling it.

The Prophets were sometimes commanded to seal and shut up their Prophecies, that the Originals might be preserved till the fulfilling of them, and then compared with the Event, *Isai. viii. 16. Jer. xxxii. 14. Dan. viii. 26. & xii. 4.* For when the Prophecies were not to be fulfilled till many Years, and, in some cases, not till several Ages afterwards, it was requisite that the Original Writings should be kept with all care; but when the time was so near at hand, that the Prophecies must be in every one's memory, or that the Originals could not be suspected or supposed to be lost, there was not the same care required, *Rev. xxii. 10.* It seems to have been customary (y) for the Prophets to put their Writings into the Tabernacle, or lay them up before the Lord, *1 Sam. x. 25.* And there is a Tradition, (z) That all the Canonical Books, as well as the Law, were put into the side of the Ark.

(y) *Joseph. Antiq. l. 11. c. 1. & l. 6. c. 5.*
(z) *Epiphan. de Ponderib. & Mensur. c. 4.*

It is certain, that the Books of the Law, and the Writings of the ancient Prophets, were carefully preserved, during the Captivity, and are frequently

frequently referred to, and cited by the latter Prophets: The *Pentateuch* has been already spoken of; and this is as evident of the Prophets. The Prophecy of *Micah* is quoted, *Jer.* xxvi. 18. a little before the Captivity; and under it, the Prophecy of *Jeremiah* is cited, *Dan.* ix. 2. and all the Prophets, *ver.* 6. and so the Prophets in general are mention'd, *Nehem.* ix. 26, 30. And *Zechariah* not only cites the former Prophets, *Zech.* i. 4. but supposes their Writings well known to the People; *Should ye not bear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited, and in prosperity?* chap. vii. 7. The Prophet *Amos* is likewise cited, *Tob.* ii. 6. and *Jonas*, and the Prophets in general, *chap.* xiv. 4, 5, 8. There can then be no reason to question, but that *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Daniel*, *Zechariah*, and the other Prophets in the time of the Captivity, were very careful to keep the Books of the former Prophets; for they frequently cite them and appeal to them; and expected Deliverance out of their Captivity, by the accomplishment of them. And perhaps, from the Originals themselves, or however, from Copies taken by *Ezra* the Scribe, or by some of the latter Prophets, or at least acknowledged for genuine, and approved of by them, the ancient Prophecies, and other Inspired Writings, were preserved; and those of the latter Prophets were added to them; and all together, make up *the Book of the Prophets*, mention'd *Act.* vii. 42. which was read, as well as the Law,

every

every *Sabbath-day*, *Act.* xiii. 27. The Books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings*, have the Title of the *former Prophets*, in the Hebrew Bibles, to distinguish them from the Books which they set out under the Title of the *latter Prophets*, *Isaiab*, *Jeremiah*, &c. The Books of *Joshua* and *Judges* have been already spoken of. The Books of *Samuel* were written by *Samuel*, *Nathan* and *Gad*, *1 Chron.* xxix. 29. from whence we may conclude, that the First Book of *Samuel*, to the 25th. Chapter, was written by *Samuel* himself; and the rest of that, and the whole Second Book, by *Nathan* and *Gad*: but *Samuel* being a Person so much concerned in the former part of the History, and having written so much of it out of respect to him, the whole Two Books go under his Name: though, indeed, the *Jews* anciently reckoned both the Books of *Samuel* as one Book; and *Aquila* (as *Theodorit* has observed) made no distinction between the First and Second Books of *Samuel*, following the Hebrew Copies of his time: and in our Hebrew Bibles, though they are distinguished, yet they are not distinguished in the same manner as the two Books of *Kings* and of *Chronicles* are: and it is no wonder, that a Book begun by *Samuel*, and continued by other Prophets, should bear the Name only of *Samuel*. From *1 Chron.* xxix. 29. we may likewise learn, that the Beginning of the First Book of *Kings* must be written by one of these Prophets. Both the Books of *Kings*, as far as *Ezekiah's* Reign, were written before *Josiah's* time;

for, *2 Kin.* 18. 5. it is said of *Hezekiah*, That he trusted in the Lord God of Israel: so that after him was none like him of all the kings of *Judah*, nor any that were before him: And of *Josiah*, it is said, *2 King.* xxiii. 25. That like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, &c. For it is evident, that *Josiah*, in his Reformation, exceeded *Hezekiah*; and from hence it appears, that the History of *Hezekiah* must be written before *Josiah's* time; or else it could not have been, with truth, said of *Hezekiah*, That there was no King after him who was like him, or equalled him, of all the Kings of *Judah*. From *1 Chron.* iv. 43. it appears, that it was written before the Captivity; though the Genealogies were transcribed afterwards out of the Records, as we learn from *1 Chron.* ix. 1. That the Second Book of *Chronicles*, as well as the First Book of *Kings*, was written before the Captivity, we may conclude from *2 Chron.* v. 9. *1 King.* viii. 8. for the Ark was not remaining after the Captivity. The last Chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*, gives so particular an account of the manner of carrying them away Captive, in every material circumstance, that it seems to have been written at that very time; and is an argument, that Memoirs were constantly taken and preserved of all that happened. The Second Book of *Chronicles* concludes with the First Year of *Cyrus*, in the same words with which the Book of *Ezra* begins, being added by him at the time when

when *Cyrus* gave out his Proclamation: for the Prophets, from time to time, made Continuations to the Histories of their Predecessors, by inserting what related to their own Times; and it was no unusual thing, among the Ancients, (as *Grotius* observes) to begin one Book with the Conclusion of another.

The *Psalms* are quoted under the Title of the *Prophets*, *Mat.* xiii. 35. & xxvii. 35. and from the first penning, they were used in the Publick Service of God, *1 Chron.* xvi. 7. *2 Chron.* v. 13. & vii. 6. & xx. 21. *Jer.* xxxiii. 11. *Ezra* iii. 10, 11. This was known, even to their Enemies, in their Captivity, *Psal.* cxxxvii. 3. and some of them were written by the Prophets under it. And Lessons out of the Law and the Prophets, with Hymns out of the *Psalms*, and Prayers, made up the Jewish Form of Worship. *Moses* and the *Prophets*, are put for the whole Old Testament, *Luke* xvi. 29. *Acts* xiii. 15.

And if both the Law and the Prophets, comprehending all the Books of Scripture written before the Captivity, were still extant, and well known, and made use of by pious Men, during all that time, and the People had Copies of them, or had means and opportunities of being acquainted with them, as the Prophet *Zechariah* supposes, *Zech.* vii. 7. there is no reason to imagine, that they had not sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew Tongue at their Restoration, many being still alive, who were first carried away Captive: and the Writings of the Prophets,

phets, during the Captivity, shew that the People did understand it ; for they all wrote in the *Hebrew Language*, except upon some particular occasions, where their Prophecies more immediately concerned the *Babylonian Affairs*. Both Men and Women could understand *Ezra*, when he read the Law ; *And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law*, Neh.viii.3. And it was not the Language, unless in some Particulars, which in all Languages will want explication to the Vulgar, who are Natives, but the *Sence and Meaning*, that was interpreted, ver. 7, 8. And in the same manner, the Letter of *Artaxerxes* was both *written in the Syrian tongue*, and *interpreted in the Syrian tongue*, Ezra iv. 7. *Nehemiah* particularly complains, that the Children of those who had married strange Wives, *could not speak in the Jews language* : which supposes that the Children of other Parents, as well as the Parents themselves, were taught to speak the Hebrew Tongue, Neh. xiii. 24. And the Decree of *Ahasuerus* in favour of the *Jews*, was written *unto every province, according unto the writing thereof ; and unto every people, after their language ; and unto the Jews, according to their writing, and according to their language*, Est.viii. 9. which seems to imply, that the *Jews* still retained not only their Language, but their manner of Writing it, or the form and fashion of their Letters, under the Captivity.

Not

Not long after the Captivity, the Scriptures were translated into the *Greek Tongue* ; and were dispersed into so many hands, among the *Jews* and *Profelytes*, that the Copies could not be destroyed, either in the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, or at any other time, by the malice of Persecutors, or any other accident. And though the *Jews* were so fond of their Traditions, as to *make the Word of God of none effect* by them ; yet they never added any Books to the Canon of Scripture, in favour of those Traditions which they were so zealous for ; but when they had no longer any Prophets among them, they durst not place any other Books in the same Rank and Authority with those which the Prophets had left behind them. All the Canonical Books were written by Inspired Authors, and have been in constant use among the People of the *Jews*, in their private Houses, and publick Assemblies, even from the first writing them ; for they were preserved during the Captivity, and both understood and used by the People : but their other Books, written under the Second Temple, though never so useful and pious, were never received with the like esteem and veneration ; they pretended to no more than Humane Composition, and were never ranked with those of Divine Authority.

C H A P.

C H A P. X.

Of the Prophecies and Miracles of the Prophets.

THE False Prophets prophesied in the Name of *Jehovah*, 1 *King*. xxii. which supposes that True Prophecies were wont to be delivered in his Name, or else they could never have hoped to deceive by it. And in the Historical Books of the *Old Testament*, in which the Prophecies and Miracles of the Prophets are related, reference is frequently made to the Records then extant in the *Chronicles* of the *Kings* of *Judah* and *Israel*; most of the Prophecies and Miracles being of that Publick Nature, and so intermix'd with the Affairs of State, that they must be recorded together with them.

(a) *Joseph. Antiquit.*
l. 10. c. 5.

Josiah (a) was prophesied of by Name, Three hundred sixty one Years before he was born: *Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name*, 1 *King*. xiii. 2. and this was foretold by a Prophet, who came out of *Judah*, purposely to denounce the Judgments of God upon the Priests of the Altar, and upon the Altar it self, which *Jeroboam* had newly set up at *Bethel*, when *Jeroboam* stood by the Altar to burn Incense: and his Prediction, at the same time, was confirmed by Two Miracles; one wrought upon *Jeroboam* himself, by drying up his hand, which he stretched forth against the

the Prophet, and which, by the Prophet's Prayer, was restored again whole to him, as it was before; the other Miracle was wrought upon the Altar, by rending it, and pouring out the Ashes from it. And a Prophecy delivered in the presence and to the face of an enraged Prince, against the Religion of his own setting up, to secure to himself the Kingdom he so lately became possessed of, at the very time when he was offering Incense upon his New Altar: And this Prophecy, confirmed by an immediate Judgment both upon the King himself, and his Altar, in the sight of so numerous an Appearance as must be present on so solemn an occasion, and these Enemies to the Prophet, who came from *Judah*, and to his Religion; a Prophecy thus delivered, had all the Circumstances to make it remarkable and notorious, in all the Tribes both of *Israel* and *Judah* then at hostility with each other, that can almost be conceived: And yet the strange Death of the Prophet of *Judah*, for transgressing, by his own confession, the Word of the Lord to him, and his Sepulchre, with its Title or *Inscription* still remaining at *Bethel*, when *Josiah* demolished the Altar there, gave a further confirmation to it.

The fulfilling of this Prophecy by *Josiah*, was no less remarkable, 2 *King*. xxiii. 15. *Josiah* was the Son of a very wicked King, and born at a time when the People were exceedingly corrupted by the Idolatry of his Grandfather *Manasse*;

Manasses; and his Sons likewise proved wicked: so that he was so singular in his Piety, and so wonderful an Example of it, that no Man of his own Age could have imagin'd that of him, which had been foretold so many hundred years ago. In all humane appearance, this was a very unlikely time to see that Prophecy fulfilled; and that which had been wonderful in any Age, was much more wonderful in this: and in so wicked an Age, this good King set about the Work of Reformation very young, to shew that it was not of Men, but of God.

The Deliverance of *Judah*, at *Jehoshaphat's* Prayer, was foretold by *Jahaziel*, in the midst of the Congregation; and was accomplished accordingly, by their Enemies destroying one another, *2 Chron. xx.*

Elijah foretold, that the Dogs should lick *Ahab's* Blood in *Jezreel*, where they had licked the Blood of *Naboth*: which, as (b) *Josephus* says, was objected by *Zedechiab*, one of the False Prophets, against *Micaiah*, who foretold, that *Ahab* should be slain at *Ramoth-gilead*; but he was brought home in his Chariot from *Ramoth-gilead* to *Samaria*, and there the Dogs licked his Blood in *Jezreel*, *1 King. xxii. 38.* so that both the Prophecy of *Elijah* and *Micaiah* was fulfilled: And when one Prophet seems contrary to another, one foretelling the principal thing, and another some accidental circumstance, which those that were present, and most concerned in the Action, could not imagine, till it happened; and

(b) *Joseph.*
Antiquit.
l. 8. c. 10.

and False Prophets, in the mean time, watch the Events, to take all Advantages from it, against the True Prophets, and can find none: nothing more can be desired, to assure us of the Truth of any Prophecy. The same Prophet foretold the like Judgment upon *Jezebel*, and that the House of *Ahab* should be like the House of *Jeroboam*, and like the House of *Baasha*; the Destruction of both which had been foretold by other Prophets, and their Prophecies fulfilled, as this of *Elijah's* also was.

Elijah, by a Writing sent to *Jehoram* King of *Judah*, foretold his Death, and the strange manner of it, *viz.* That after the loss of his Children, and his Wives, and all his Goods, he should be afflicted in his Bowels, and that his Bowels should fall out by degrees, *2 Chron. xxi. 12.* The same Prophet not only foretold the Death of *Ahaziah*, but caused Fire twice to come down from Heaven, upon those who were sent to Apprehend him, *2 King. i.* And at his Prayer, Fire descended from Heaven, and consumed the Sacrifice, in the sight of *Baal's* Prophets, being Four hundred and fifty; to whom *Elijah*, who was the only Prophet of the Lord there present, had made this Proposal, *The God that answereth by fire, let him be God:* And when *Baal*, notwithstanding all their hideous Cries, and the cutting themselves, did not hear them; then, upon *Elijah's* Prayer, *the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water*

water that was in the trench, 1 King. xviii. 38. which was the same Miracle, repeated in the midst of Idolaters who were so enraged and provoked against the Prophet *Elijah*, that had been before wrought in the sight of the People of *Israel*, in the time of *Moses*, *Lev. ix. 24.* and of *David*, 1 *Chron. xxi. 26.* and at the Dedication of *Solomon's Temple*, 2 *Chron. vii. 1.* (c) And this Miracle of *Elijah*, in bringing down Fire from Heaven, to consume the Sacrifice, and that of *Moses* in like manner, were both confessed to be true, by *Julian the Apostate* himself.

(c) *Cybil. contra Julian. l. 10.*

The miraculous Cure of *Naaman's Leprosie*, must be notorious throughout the Kingdoms both of *Syria* and *Israel*, 2 *King. v.* The wonderful Deliverance of the *Israelites*, when the *Syrians* heard a noise of Horses and Chariots, and therefore raised the Siege of *Samaria*, and the Plenty which followed, was foretold by *Elisha*, with a Judgment upon that Lord who doubted of the Truth of his Prediction. The same Prophet foretold the Death of *Benhadad* King of *Syria*, and that he should neither recover of his Sickness, nor die a Natural Death. And the Reign of *Hazael*, who succeeded him, is described in such true and dreadful Characters, that *Hazael* thought it impossible for him to be guilty of so much cruelty, 2 *King. vii, viii.*

The Leprosie inflicted upon *Uzziah*, for presuming to burn Incense unto the Lord, which it was lawful for the Priests only to do, was a permanent Miracle; for his Leprosie continued till

till his death; and for that reason, he lived separately, and his Son, from that time, had the administration of Affairs, 2 *King. xv. 5.* and this Miracle of the Leprosie was accompanied with a terrible Earthquake, mention'd *Zech. xiv. 5.* *Amos i. 1.* and the (d) Ruines (d) *Joseph. Antiquit. l. 9. c. 11.* which were caused by the Earthquake, remained as a perpetual Memorial of the Judgment.

An Hundred fourscore and five thousand of the *Assyrians* were slain by an Angel of the Lord, in one Night, 2 *King. xix. 35.* and this Deliverance was foretold by *Isaiah*, when the *Assyrians* were in the height of their Pride and Blasphemy, and the People of *Judah* in the extremity of Danger and Despair, *Isai. xxxvii.* At the Prayer of *Isaiah*, the Sun went back ten Degrees, for a Sign to King *Hezekiah* of his Recovery: and the Princes of *Babylon* sent Embassadors to enquire of this Wonder, 2 *King. xx. 11.* 2 *Chron. xxxii. 31.*

It was impossible there should be any mistake in Miracles of this nature, which have the same Evidence that those of *Moses* himself had, having the joint Testimony of a whole People to prove the Truth of them.

Isaiah prophesied of *Cyrus* by Name, (e) (e) *Joseph. Antiquit. l. 11. c. 1.* Two hundred and ten Years before the accomplishment of his Prophecy; and foretold the Re-building of the Temple, an Hundred and

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forty

(f) Hieron.
ad Isai.
c. 44.

forty Years before it was demolished. The expressions are so plain and full, that, as St. Jerom (f) observes, the History of Cyrus, by Xenophon, is an admirable Comment upon this Prophecy of *Isaiah*, *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord, to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him: He shall build my City, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts, Isai. xlv. 28. & xlv. 1, 13.* And this Cyrus himself, tho' an Heathen Prince, was so sensible of, that he acknowledged it in his *Proclamation* which he put forth for the Building the Temple: *Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23. Ezra i. 2.* And the same Prophet who foretold the Empire of Cyrus the *Persian*, foretold likewise, That the Kingdom of the *Chaldæans* should be destroyed by the *Medes*, *Isai. xiii. 17.* which was prophesied of too by *Jeremiah*, *Fer. li. 11. 28.* And this is the more remarkable; (g) because tho' *Darius Medus* conquer'd *Babylon*, yet he dying soon after, and Cyrus succeeding him, the Fame of *Cyrus*, who was, at the taking of *Babylon*, but General of his Army, so obscured the

(g) See
Sir W. Raleigh, l. 3.
c. 2. §. 2.

the Name and Memory of *Darius*, that Historians have taken no notice of him; though he is found mention'd by the *Scholiast*, upon *Aristophanes*, who says, that a *Darius*, who was before him, who was Father of *Xerxes*, gave Name to the Pieces of Coin call'd *Δαρχοί*, who must be *Darius Medus*. So much better were Transactions known to the Prophets before-hand, than to Historians afterwards. The Judgments which were to befall divers other Nations, were also foretold by *Isaiah*, and described by particular Circumstances. The Destruction of *Nineveh* (h) was foretold by the Prophet *Nahum*, an Hundred and fifteen Years before-hand.

(h) Josephi.
Antiquit.
l. 9. c. 11.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* foretold the Conquests of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the Captivity of the *Jews* by him, in so remarkable and solemn a manner, that it was notorious to all the neighbouring Nations: For, according to the Custom of delivering Prophecies by some visible Signs, as well as in Words, he sent Bonds and Yokes to the king of *Edom*, and to the king of *Moab*, and to the king of the *Ammonites*, and to the king of *Tyrus*, and to the king of *Zidon*, by the hand of the messengers which came to *Jerusalem* (from these several Kings) unto *Zedekiah* king of *Judah*; and foretold, That all these nations should serve *Nebuchadnezzar*, and his son, and his sons son, *Jer. xxvii. 3, 7.* And the *Jews* put him in Prison, for this Prophecy; where he was kept,

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when *Nebuchadnezzar* took the City, and set him at liberty. And when the *Chaldæans* had raised the Siege, by reason of *Pharaoh's* Army, which was coming to the Relief of *Jerusalem*; *Jeremiah* told the *Jews*, That *Pharaoh's* Army, should return into *Ægypt*, without effecting any thing; and that the *Chaldæans* should come again, and take the City, and burn it with fire, Jer. xxxvii. 5. He likewise prophesied against *Ægypt*, which the *Jews* made their Refuge and Sanctuary; and pointed out the very Place where *Nebuchadnezzar* would pitch his Tent, by taking great Stones, and hiding them in the Clay, at the entry of *Pharaoh's* House *Takpanhes*, in the sight of the Men of *Judah*; declaring, That his throne should be set upon those stones, and he should spread his royal pavilion over them, Jer. xliii. 9, 10. And the accomplishment of his Prophecy concerning *Pharaoh*, chap. xlv. 30. is to be seen in (i) *Herodotus*.

(i) *Herodotus*.
Enterp.
c. 169.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* was opposed and contradicted by several False Prophets, who prophesied deceitful and flattering Delusions to the People, persuading them, that no evil should come upon them; of whom *Jeremiah* foretold, That *Hananiah* should die that same Year in which he vented his false Prophecies, chap. xxviii. 16, 17. and, That *Abab* the Son of *Kolaiab*, and *Zedechiah* the Son of *Maaseiah*, should be taken Captive by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and slain in the sight of the People of

of *Judah*, and roasted in the fire, chap. xxix. 21, 22. And thus distinctly foretelling the Time and Manner of the Death of those False Prophets, he vindicated his own Prophecies, which were at first so unwillingly believed, beyond all contradiction.

But that which seemed most strange, and was most objected against in the Prophecies of *Jeremiah*, was, his Prophecy concerning the Death of *Zedechiah*; for in this, (k) He and (k) *Ezekiel* were thought to contradict each other. *Jeremiah* prophesied in *Jerusalem*, at the same time when *Ezekiel* prophesied in *Babylon*, and concerning the same things; and *Jeremiah's* Prophecy was sent to the Captives in *Babylon*, and *Ezekiel's* to the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*. But *Jeremiah* said, Thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of *Babylon*, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to *Babylon*. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O *Zedechiah* king of *Judah*, Thus saith the Lord of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword; but thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah Lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord, Jer. xxxiv. 3, 4, 5. But *Ezekiel* prophesied in these words; I will bring him to *Babylon*, to the land of the *Chaldæans*: yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there, Ezek. xii. 13. Now these two Prophets writing of the Captivity of

(k) *Josephus*.
Antiquit.
l. 10. c. 30.
Hieron. ad
Ezek. c. 12.

Zedekiah, reckon up all the Circumstances of it between them, in such a manner, as that they were believed to contradict each other; and thereby the expectation and attention of the People was the more excited to observe the Fulfilling of their Prophecies. *Jeremiah* said, That he should see the King of *Babylon*, and be carried to *Babylon*: *Ezekiel*, That he should not see *Babylon*. *Jeremiah*, That he should die in peace, and be buried after the manner of his Ancestors: *Ezekiel*; That he should die at *Babylon*. And if we compare all this with the History, nothing ever was more punctually fulfilled: For *Zedekiah* saw the King of *Babylon*, who commanded his Eyes to be put out, before he was brought to *Babylon*; and he died there, but died peaceably, and was suffered to have the usual Funeral Solemnities, *2 King*. xxv. 6, 7. And therefore both Prophecies proved true in the Event, which seemed before to be inconsistent. And so critical an Exactness in every minute Circumstance, in Prophecies delivered by two Persons, who were before thought to contradict each other, was such a conviction to the *Jews*, after they had seen them so punctually fulfilled, in their Captivity, that they could no longer doubt, but that both were from God.

Jeremiah foretold also, That the Kingdom of the *Chaldæans* should be destroyed, and that the *Jews* should be restored, after a Captivity

tivity of Seventy Years: *These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years: And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldæans, Jer. xxv. 11, 12. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place, Jer. xxix. 10.* And this Prophecy of *Jeremiah* the *Jews* depended upon, under the Captivity, *Dan*. ix. 2. *Zech*. i. 12. and it was exactly fulfilled to them. The Generations of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Posterity, that should succeed him, till the Destruction of that Monarchy, are foretold, *Jer*. xxvii. 7. The Destruction of *Babylon*, with the manner of Taking the City, as it was foretold and described by the Prophet, agrees punctually with the Account of it by (1) *Herodotus*. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of *Babylon* that his City is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. And this was declared in a memorable and solemn manner, by writing it down, and by casting the Book into *Euphrates*, *Jer*. li. 31, 32, 62, 63.

The Destruction of *Tyre* and *Zidon*, and of *Ægypt*, was foretold by the Prophet *Eze-*

kiel; and the Restoration of the *Ægyptians*, after Forty Years, *Ezek. xxviii. 19. & xxix. 12, 13.* The Prophanation of the Temple, and of the Sanctuary, by *Antiochus Epiphanes*, with the Death of *Antiochus*, and a Description of his Temper, and of his very Countenance, was clearly delivered by *Daniel*, Four hundred and eight Years (m) before the accomplishment, *Dan. viii.* *Daniel* likewise described the Fate of the Four Monarchies, the Restoration of the Jews, and the Rebuilding of their City; and the Birth of the *Messias*, with the precise Time of it. And *Alexander the Great* is said (n) to have been encouraged by *Daniel's* Prophecy, in his Expedition. Indeed, his Prophecy, and the History of the Four Monarchies, are so exactly parallel, that *Porphyry* could find no other evasion, but to say, That the Book of *Daniel* was written after the Events: which, as *Grotius* observes, is as absurd, as if a Man should maintain, that the Works of *Virgil* were not written under *Augustus*, but after his time: For the Book of *Daniel* was as publick, and as much dispersed, and as universally received, as ever any Book could be.

Lastly, *Haggai* and *Malachi* prophesied, That Christ should come, before the Destruction of the Second Temple, *Hag. ii. 7, 9. Mal. iii. 1.* And *Hosea* foretold the present state of the People of *Israel*, in those remarkable words, *They shall be wanderers among the nations, Hos. ix. 17.*

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Not to insist therefore upon other Miracles and Prophecies, which were concerning things of lesser moment, or less remarkable in the eyes of the World; these may suffice, which were of that Publick nature, that there could be no deceit or mistake in them: multitudes of Men, whom Prejudice or Malice had prepared to make the utmost Discoveries, were Witnesses to the Miracles; and both the Prophecies themselves, and the Fulfilling of them, were notorious to other Nations, as well as to the *Jews*, to whom they were delivered, and in whose hands they have ever since been, being read in the Synagogues every *Sabbath-day*. The *Jews* had as good Evidence, for Instance, that *Elijah* wrought his Miracles, as they could have, that there was such a Man in the World. And when the Publick Transactions and Councils of Princes, the Fate and Revolution of Empires, with the prefix'd Time and Place, and the very Names of the Persons, were so particularly foretold, Two or Three hundred Years before the Things came to pass; we may as well question the Truth of all History, as the Certainty of these Revelations. For, indeed, they are the History of Things that were to come, set down in the very Circumstances in which they afterwards were brought to pass. And yet if a Man should dispute whether there ever were such a Man as *Elijah*, or such a Prince as *Josiah*, or *Cyrus*, he would but make himself ridiculous; but if he deny that

Elijah

(m) *Joseph. Antiq. r. l. 12. c. 11*

(n) *Ibid. l. 11. c. 8.*

Elijah wrought such Miracles, or that *Isaiab* spoke of *Cyrus*, and another Prophet of *Josiah*, by Inspiration, perhaps he may be thought to have made some great Discovery, and to know something above the rest of Mankind, and shall be likely to meet with Applause, instead of that Contempt which such Pretences deserve: so strangely partial are Men for any thing which is but against the Authority of the Scriptures. For I think it will be hard for Men to bring better Proof, that there were such Men as *Elijah*, and *Josiah*, and *Cyrus*, than may be brought to shew, that the latter were by Name prophesied of long before their Birth, and that the first wrought all the Miracles related of him; or to produce clearer Evidence, that there was such a City as *Jerusalem* before the Reign of *Cyrus*, than we have, that the Destruction of the City and Temple, and the Captivity of the People, with their Restoration after Seventy Years, was foretold by *Jeremiah*.

The Prophets did their Miracles in the most publick manner; and their Prophecies were delivered not in corners, but openly, before all the People; not in obscure and ambiguous Words, but in plain Terms, with a particular Account of Persons, and Time, and Place: they were kept, they were read and studied by that very People who at first as little regarded them, as any Man now amongst us can do, but slew the Prophets themselves,
and

and rejected their Prophecies with rage and indignation; but were afterwards, by the Event of Things, so fully convinced (which was likewise foretold, *Exek.* xxxiii. 33.) of their Divine Inspiration and Authority, that they wholly depended and relyed upon them, and lived in an uncomfortable Exile, upon the sole Hopes and Expectations of seeing the rest of their Prophecies fulfilled. And therefore the Posterity of those who had slain the Prophets, had the highest veneration for the Memory of these Prophets whom their Forefathers had killed; they built and adorned their Sepulchres, and chose to die any Death, rather than renounce the Authority of their Books, or part with them, even when they had forsaken their Doctrine, and changed their Religion for vain Traditions, and superstitious Observances; and when it was so reproachful to them to erect Monuments of perpetual acknowledgment, That they were *the Children of them which killed the Prophets*, *Matth.* xxiii. 31. they referred themselves to these Prophets for the Authority of their Religion, and acknowledged, that they had neither Prophecies nor Miracles after the Captivity.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Dependance of the several Parts of the Scriptures upon each other ; and that the Old Testament proves the New, and the New again proves the Old, as the Cause and the Effect.

IT is a thing altogether incredible, that the Inhabitants of so small a part of the World as *Judæa* is, should lay a Design of imposing upon the rest of Mankind, which could prove so successful for so many thousand Years together ; and that they should besuch Masters of Deceit, and the World so fond of receiving Revelations from them, that at last, though the greatest part of that People disclaimed the Books, which some few, and those the most unlearned among them, would impose for Inspired Writings ; yet the Authority of these Books should be more acknowledged in all Parts of the World, than those had ever been, in which they all unanimously agreed, and the rest should be received for the sake of these, more than ever they had been upon their own account : which is the case of the Books of the Old and New Testament. If the *Jews* (even the meanest and most ignorant of them) could do this merely by their own Wit and Advice, they must have a Genius superiour

superiour to that of all Mankind besides. For what imaginable Reason is there, why the Oracles of all the Heathen Nations should never be much regarded, and now, in a manner, utterly lost, and that the Books of the *Jews* should still be preserved in their full Authority ; but the Power and Advantage of Truth in these, and the want of it in them ?

And the Evidence of this Truth is most observable, in the mutual Dependance which all the Parts of the Scriptures have one upon another. They were penn'd by Men of different Countreys, different Ages, different Conditions and Callings and Interests, from the King to the poor Fisherman ; and yet all carry on the same Design : They are not like the Oracles of the Heathen Gods, which must stand or fall by themselves ; but there is an admirable Series and Connexion between all the Writings of the Holy Scriptures, by which the several Parts of them give a mutual support and attestation to each other. The *Pentateuch* of *Moses* contains the first Lineaments, and evident Types and Prophecies of all that is contained in the rest : He foretold, That a succession of Prophets should arise, and that at last the *Great Prophet* should be sent, who is *Christ* ; and he foretold all that was to befall the *Jews*, from his own time, to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. And as *Moses* has given us the general State of the *Jews*, for all

all Generations ; so the several Prophets, who were sent from time to time, according to his Predictions, foretold particular Events, and more-especially they foretold and described the Times of the Gospel. This was the great Design of all Prophecies, and the thing that God had spoken by the Prophets, *which have been since the world began*, Luk.i.70. For in Christ was the Accomplishment of all the Types and Prophecies in the Old Testament.

And this Dependence and Coherence between all the Parts of the Scriptures, in the Matter and Design of them, which is as great as the dependence of one part of any Book written by the same Author can be upon another, gives great strength and confirmation to the whole ; since it is an Evidence, that it was all Inspired by the same Infallible Spirit ; and if one part of Scripture be proved to be true, all must be so : for besides the particular Evidence which may be brought for any part separately, we must consider the Connexion which it has with the rest, and the Evidence which is derived upon it by this Connexion. If the *Pentateuch* be once proved to be of Divine Authority, then the Prophets who succeeded *Moses* must be Divinely Inspired ; because he foretold the succession of such Prophets : And if the Prophecies and Miracles of the Prophets were Divine, the *Pentateuch* must be so ; because they all along
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acknowledged and appealed to it, as containing God's Covenant with his People the *Jews*, and being therefore the ground and foundation of their own Mission. If *Moses* and the Prophets be from God, the Gospel must be from him, if that be foretold by them : And if the Prophecies and Miracles of our Saviour and his Disciples prove their Divine Authority, the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets must be likewise of the same Authority ; because they acknowledge them for such, and prove their own Authority from them, as well as from the Miracles that they themselves wrought. And if the Prophecies and Miracles either of *Moses* or of the Prophets, or of our Saviour and his Apostles taken by themselves, and apart from the rest, be sufficient, they must needs be more convincing, when they are considered together, in their united Force and Light.

I might further observe, That Miracles without Prophecies, or Prophecies without Miracles, or that one evident Miracle, or one evident Prophecy ; at least, That either the Miracles or Prophecies of some one Person, in the several Ages in which so many Prophets lived, would have been a sufficient ground of Faith, and that therefore they must all be much rather so in conjunction : But I shall only desire it may be remembered, That whatever Evidence has been brought in Proof of the Divine Authority of the Books of
Moses,

Moses, and of the Prophets, doth reciprocally prove both the one and the other; and that therefore whatever is brought from either of them, in Proof of the Gospel, has the Evidence of the whole; and that the Gospel in different respects doth prove them, and is proved by them, *both* deriving Authority from the Books of the Old Testament, and communicating its own Authority to them: For as the Cause may be proved by its Effect, and the Effect by its Cause; so both Predictions prove the Things foretold; and the Accomplishment of the Things foretold, verifie the Predictions; and Miracles wrought in consequence of Prophecies concerning them, have doubly the Divine Seal and Attestation. Now, the *Messias* is the Scope and Centre of the whole Old Testament, as the *Jews* themselves ever understood it; and whatever Testimony is produced from thence, brings with it the Evidence of the whole: And a like Evidence is again reflected upon the whole Old Testament, by the Accomplishment of any part of it in the New, and by the appeal which our Saviour and his Apostles constantly made to it.

C H A P.

C H A P. XII.

Of the Person of our Blessed Saviour.

THAT in the reign of *Tiberius* there lived such a person as *Jesus Christ*, who suffered (a) under *Pontius Pilate*, is expressly written by *Tacitus*: and that he cured Diseases and wrought other Miracles, was never denied by the worst Enemies to the Christian Name and Doctrine. So that the substance of the History of the Life and Death of our Saviour, is acknowledged by our very Adversaries, and the Power, by which he wrought his Miracles, is the thing which was in dispute between them and the Primitive Christians: And therefore I shall take the observations which I make concerning our Blessed Saviour, from that account which the Evangelists give of him, which is in great part confessed by the *Jews* and *Heathens*, and which deserves at least the same credit that all other Histories do, till it can be disproved, and in the following Chapters I shall shew, that it is infallibly true.

The Divine Nature of our B. Saviour is of another consideration: we are in this place to consider him, according to the Appearance he made in the World: and

(a) *Tacit.*
Annal. lib.
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this was such as shewed him to be void of all ambitious and aspiring thoughts, and to be meek and humble, and perfectly vertuous and holy; his Miracles were wrought without vanity and ostentation, and never out of Revenge, or to shew his Power over his Enemies, but always with a gracious and merciful design: he avoided all opportunities of Popularity; he would not intermeddle in private affairs, when he was appealed to; and made his escape, when the people would have taken him by force to make him a King, after they had seen the Miracle of the Loaves; by which it appeared, that he, who was able to sustain so many thousands in the Wilderness, might have raised and maintained what Army he pleased, and might have made himself as great as he would, notwithstanding any opposition.

He dealt freely and generously with his Disciples, not deluding them with vain hopes, nor promising them great Matters, but checking their aspiring Thoughts and telling them truly and plainly, that they were to expect nothing but miseries in this World from the Profession of his Doctrine; he put it to their own choice, whether they would take up their Cross and follow him; and when he was betray'd by one of these very Disciples, he uses no upbraiding or reproachful Language, but be-

bespeaks him with a Divine Patience and Meekness: No man ever suffer'd with so much injustice and cruelty, nor ever any man with so great compassion and charity towards all his Enemies.

He lived a mean and despised Life, and never was in such a condition as could tempt any man to flatter him, or to conceal any fault, if he had been guilty of any: and he had always many Enemies, who endeavoured to fasten the worst calumnies upon him, but their malice tended only to render his Innocence the more manifest and illustrious.

The person who betrayed him, and delivered him into the hands of his Enemies, was *one of the Twelve*, one of his own Disciples and Apostles, whom he had sent out to gain Profelytes, and had committed to him a Power of working Miracles, and of doing whatsoever was requisite to gain Reception for his Religion in the world. *Judas* was one of the Twelve, who were nearest to him, and were admitted to all the secrets of his Kingdom, and were entrusted with the most hidden Mysteries, and obscure Doctrines of his Religion; whatsoever was spoken to others in Parables, was explained afterwards to them in private: nothing was withheld from them, which it was convenient for them to be acquainted withal, or which they were capable of knowing. Nay, *Judas* seems!

to have had a particular mark of Favour placed upon him, in that he was the keeper of the Bag; for it was an Office of some Trust and Confidence: however, it gave him an opportunity of knowing, whether his Master had any such ambitious designs, as he was accused of. For if he had *perverted the Nation, and forbidden to give Tribute to Caesar*, and had endeavoured to set himself up as King of the Jews, which was the charge laid against him before *Pilate*, such a Project could not have been carried on without amassing a great Treasure, which therefore if any such thing had been in hand, *Judas* had been best able to give an account of. But when one, who had constantly attended upon him, and was so intimately acquainted with all the secrets of his Life and Doctrine, had nothing to alledge against him, after he had betrayed him, what could make more for his Justification, or be a clearer Demonstration of his Innocence? When men are once prevail'd upon to turn Traytors, they seldom do things by halves, but if there be the least pretence or colour to be found, they will be sure to lay hold of it to justify their villainy. And it is the most undeniable proof of our Saviour's Innocence, that Treachery it self could discover nothing to fasten upon him: but tho' *Judas* had been suborned by the chief Priests to betray his Master for thirty pieces of Silver, yet

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neither that nor a greater sum, (which we may be confident would not have been denied him) could prevail with *Judas* himself, to undertake to appear as a witness against him.

When one of his own Disciples was perswaded, or rather had offered of his own accord to betray him, it could not be imagined, but that the Chief Priests would urge him to come in, as a witness to the accusations which they had framed against him; this had been a much more acceptable service to them, than barely to deliver him up: for what could have brought a greater disgrace upon his Person, or more discredit upon his Religion, than for one of his own Disciples to witness against him, that he *had committed things worthy of Death*? Men, who were at such a loss for matter to charge Christ with, and at last could not make their Witnesses agree together, would never, we may be sure, have omitted such an opportunity as this of leading him with infamy, & stifling his Doctrine in his death. And he who was so ready and forward to betray his master would never have stuck at accusing him if he had had any thing to say against him; and no other reason can be given why he did not do it, but that he was over-awed by that Innocence & holiness, which he knew to be in him, & was seized with that remorse of Conscience and terror of Mind, as not to be able to bear up under the guilt of what he had

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already done. For Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of Silver to the Chief Priests and Elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood: And they said, What is that to us, see thou to that; And he cast down the pieces of Silver in the Temple, and went and hanged himself, Matt. xxvii. 3, 4. How could the Chief Priests themselves have contrived a better way to vindicate our Saviour's innocence, if they had never so much endeavoured it, than for one of his own Disciples, after he had betrayed him, instead of witnessing against him, which it was natural to suppose he would have done, to be so far from that, as to come before them all, and fling down the Money in the Temple, which they had given him as the hire of his Treachery, and declare publickly, that he had betrayed the innocent Blood; and then to give a further proof of all this, out of meer anguish and horror of Mind, to go immediately from them, and hang himself?

If our Saviour had done any thing, whereby he could deserve to be put to Death, Judas must needs have known it, and when he had once betrayed him, it cannot be supposed he would forbear to discover any thing he knew of him. But when on the contrary he was so far from

accusing him, that as soon as he saw him condemned at the accusation of other false Witnesses, he could not bear the Agonies of his own mind, but went and made away with himself; this is as evident a proof of Christ's innocence, as any of the other Apostles themselves could ever give; and Judas is so far an Apostle still, as to proclaim his Master's innocence in the face of the Sanhedrim, and then to Seal that Testimony with his Blood.

It has been thought by some, that Judas, as wicked as he was, had never any design to cause his Master to be put to Death, or to be any way instrumental towards it, but he supposed that Christ would be secure enough against the Chief Priests in his own Innocence and Holiness, or that they would not dare to hurt him for fear of the People, which had been a restraint upon them in their former attempts; or that he could easily make his escape from them, as he had formerly done, and therefore his covetousness tempted him to believe, that though he should betray his Master, yet he would come to no harm by it. However, it is certain, that Judas himself cleared our Saviour's innocence by betraying him more than any other man could have done, who had not been his Disciple, and his making that confession, and then his dying upon that account, and in that manner,

may afford us that evidence, which we must have wanted, to certify us in the Truth of the Christian Religion, if Christ had not been betrayed, or had been betrayed by any but one of his own Disciples.

When he was condemned and crucify'd, one of the Thieves, who was crucified with him, made an open profession of him; when there could be no temptation of flattery, nor leisure or patience for a man in that condition to speak in that manner, but by the special Providence and Grace of God, and to give an early instance of the great efficacy of his Cross, and of the Mercy, which it reacheth forth to all repenting Sinners, our Saviour assures him, that that very day he *should be with him in Paradise*. A strange discourse upon the Cross! To speak of Kingdoms, and promise Paradise under so much infamy and torment! That one should have the Faith to ask, and the other the Power to promise so great things in that condition! Who could have had the courage to promise so much upon the Cross, but he, who was able to perform it?

And as no ill could ever be proved against him, but all circumstances concurred to confirm his innocence; as *Herod* dismissed him, and *Pilate* often declared him to have committed nothing worthy of Death: so the Devils themselves, during his

his Life here upon Earth, confessed him to be the Son of God, and after his Death, (b) by their Oracles acknowledged him to have been an holy person, whose Soul was translated into Heaven.

And this person, thus innocent and holy both in his Life and Doctrine, was prophesied of many Ages before his Birth, and all the Prophecies concerning the Messias were exactly and in a wonderful manner fulfilled in him. These Prophecies concern either his Birth, or his Life, or his Death, or his Resurrection and Ascension.

I. The Prophecies concerning the Birth of the Messias were fulfilled in our Saviour. For his Birth was prophesied of in all the circumstances of the Time, and the Place of it, and the Person of whom he was born.

I. As for the Time; by *Jacob's* Prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 10.* The Messias was to come about the time of the Dissolution of the Jewish Government. The *Scepter was not to depart from Judah*, that is, the Power and Authority of the Jewish Government was not to cease, *until Shilo came*, which the ancient (c) Jewish Interpreters expounded of the coming of their Messias. To (d) which purpose it is held by the Jews, that the great *Savedour* sat in the Tribe of *Judah*, though but part of the Court in which they sat was of that Tribe, and the rest in the Tribe of *Benjamin*. And

(b) Porphy. apud Euseb. Demonstr. Evang. lib. 3. c. 6.

(c) See Bp. Pearson in the Creed. (d) Lightfoot's Preface to the Temple. c. 21. p. 200.

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the Jews among all their objections, never objected against the time in which our Saviour came into the world, but many of them have confessed that the Messias was born at that time, but say, that because of their sins he has (e) concealed himself ever since. And the latter Jews have, by a great many stories, endeavoured to make it believed, that there is a Kingdom still of their Nation, in some unknown part of the world: tho, if this were true, it could prove nothing to their purpose, the Prophecy being concerning their Power and Authority in the promised Land.

It is certain, that soon after our Saviour's coming, *Jerusalem* was destroyed, and the Jews dispersed, and upon severe Penalties forbidden to come to their desolate and ruined City, or so much as to look upon *Zion*, the City of their Solemnities, unless it were once every year to lament their calamity; and they have ever since been a wandring and despicable People. And several times, when they have attempted to rebuild their Temple, they have not been suffered to do it; particularly, when they had the favour and encouragement of *Julian* the Apostate, who, out of malice to the Christian Name and Doctrine, was forward to promote the work, they were hindered by an Earthquake, and a miraculous eruption of Fire

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bursting out from under the foundation, which burnt down what they had erected, and destroyed those, that were employed in it, and this we have attested not only from Christian writers, who lived near that time, (f) but by an eminent Heathen Historian of the same Age. Now it was foretold by the Prophets *Haggai* and *Malachy*, that Christ should come before the destruction of the Second Temple and the destruction of this Temple was foretold by *Daniel*, with the precise time of our Saviour's coming; and to manifest to the world that Christ is come, and that therefore the Jewish Worship and Government is utterly at an end, as the Prophets had foretold, God has been pleased in so miraculous and terrible a manner to shew, that he will not suffer their Temple to be rebuilt, and whereas the Messias was to come to the Second Temple, now for so many hundreds of years, they have had no Temple at all for him to come to

2. As the time of Christ's Birth was foretold by the Prophets, so was the place likewise, and that was *Bethlehem*, a small City, and therefore the more unlikely in all humane account to have that honour bestowed upon it, to become the Birth-place of him, who, the Jews expected, should be a Temporal Prince: yet this when so well understood by the Jews of

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(f) Ammi-
an. Mar-
cellin. lib.
23. c. 1.

(e) Mun-
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that time, notwithstanding their mistaken notion of a Temporal Messias, that when Herod gathered all the Chief Priests and Scribes of the People together, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born, they answered him with one consent, in *Bethlehem of Judæa*, and quoted the Prophecy of *Micha* for the proof it, *Matt. ii.* And many believed that Jesus was the Messias, or the Christ, which they then were in expectation of; others made this objection, that he could not be the Christ, because he came out of *Galilee*: but hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of *David*, and out of the Town of *Bethlehem*, where *David* was? This was the great objection against our Saviour, that he could not be the Christ, because he did not come out of *Bethlehem*, but out of *Galilee*: for they thought he had been born at *Nazareth* in *Galilee*, not at *Bethlehem* in the Tribe of *Judah*, whereas he was indeed born at *Bethlehem*, and that by so strange and particular a Providence, as doth evidently prove him to be the Christ.

For it came to pass in these days, that there went out a decree from *Caesar Augustus*, that all the world should be taxed, and registred according to their Families; and all went to be taxed, every one into his own City, into the City, which belonged to his
Lineage

Lineage and Family. And *Joseph* also went up from *Galilee* out of the City of *Nazareth* into *Judæa* unto the City of *David*, which is called *Bethlehem* (because he was of the House and Lineage of *David*) to be taxed with *Mary* his espoused Wife, being great with Child; and so it was, that while they were there the days were accomplished, that she should be delivered, *Luke ii. 1.* &c. Here we see, that their going from *Nazareth* to *Bethlehem* was not in the least designed by the *Virgin Mary* and *Joseph*, but they were obliged to go thither by a new and strange decree of the Emperor, and accordingly they went in Obedience to this Decree. If the Blessed *Virgin* had dwelt at *Bethlehem*, though the Prophecy had been fulfilled, yet there had been nothing in the circumstances extraordinary; if she had gone thither of her own accord, or if some private business had called her thither, this might have been looked upon as a contrivance, and a design to be thought the Mother of the Messias: if God himself had by an immediate Revelation sent her thither, yet this still had been liable to cavils, and might have been suspected of imposture. But when at the Command of an Heathen Prince, and such a command as had never been given out at any time before, the *Virgin Mary* was forced upon a long and tedious Journey, at an unseasonable

able time of the year, being then great with Child, and therefore very unfit for such a Journey, and not in a condition to have the least inclination or thought of undertaking it, when she was obliged by so unexpected and unwelcome a command to repair to *Bethlehem* and was at that very time delivered of her Son; all these circumstances so wonderfully concurring, have something more convincing in them, than can well be express'd.

And it is observable, that this Tax or Register was designed and begun in some parts of the Empire 27 years before, but was hindered by disturbances, which happened, upon which account anciently the *Spaniards* began their *Æra* 27 years before the computation of other Christians, supposing that the Taxing mentioned in *St. Luke*, had been at the same time, that it was begun amongst them so many years before; but the divine Providence so ordered things, that it should not be carried on then, but should be deferred till that very time when Christ was to be born, that by this means *Bethlehem* might be the place of his Birth.

And by the same special Providence it came to pass, not only that this Prophecy was fulfilled concerning his being born at *Bethlehem*, but that it should be registered in the Publick Records of the Empire, to which

which *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian* appeal in their Apologies for the proof of it; and *St. Chrysostom* mentions them, as extant at *Rome* in his time, near four hundred years after the Birth of our Saviour. And his being born there, proves that he was of the Seed of *David*, as it was prophesied that the Messias should be: for the Decree required that all should resort to the City of their Lineage or Family, and *Bethlehem* was the City of *David*. So that from our Saviour's being born at *Bethlehem*, and that by so remarkable a Providence without any humane foresight or design: we have two evident proofs that he is the Christ, he was of the Seed of *David*, and was born at *Bethlehem*, and this was attested by the Publick Records, or Censual Tables at *Rome*, which were often appealed to for the Truth of it and were remaining to be consulted for several hundred years afterwards. (g) Lightf. Chorograph. Centur. c. 51.

(g) And the *Jerusalem Gemarists* do confess, that the Messias was born at *Bethlehem* before their times.

3. The person of whom our Saviour was born, had been likewise foretold. For not only the time of his Birth, that it was to be before the destruction of the Temple, and the Place, that it was to be at *Bethlehem*, but the Tribe of which he was to be born, the Tribe of *Judah*, and the Family, the Family of *David*, and the very per-

person, that she was to be a Virgin: all were particularly foretold by the Prophets, and accordingly expected at that time by the Jews.

Concerning the Tribe and Family of which our Saviour was born, I shall observe that effectual care was taken by the Law of *Moses* to keep a perpetual distinction of their several Tribes and Families: for by the Law of the Inheritances, no inheritance could pass out of a Family either by sale of Lands (for every fiftieth year was a year of Redemption, and every man returned to his own Possession, and every man to his own Family, Lev. xxv. 10.) Or by defect of Heirs Male; for if there were Daughters they were to inherit, and if there were no Daughter, it was to pass to the nearest Kinsman, *Numb. xxvii.* and the Daughters who were Heiresses, were obliged to marry to one of the Family of the Tribe of their Fathers, *Numb. xxxvi. 8.* But if a man died without Children, his Brother, or his next Kinsman was to raise up Seed unto the deceased, and the First born was to succeed in the name of him that died without issue, *Dent. xxv. 5, 6. Ruth iii. 12.* So that he had a Natural and a Legal Father, the names of both which must be enrolled in their Registers, to entitle him and his Heirs to their Inheritance. All which was appointed with a peculiar regard to the Messiah, that the Prophecies

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concerning his Tribe and Family might be known to be fulfilled at his Birth. The Genealogies of the Jews therefore were of two kinds, one of their Natural, and the other of their Legal Descent and Parentage; and we have both these Genealogies of our Saviour set down, the one by *St. Matthew*, and the other by *St. Luke*, which must be exactly the same with the Registers of the Genealogies then extant, which both in their publick (b) Records, and in their private Books, were kept with great care and exactness, their expectation of the Messiah obliging them to it, and the constitution of their Government necessarily requiring it: for all the Title and Claim they could have to their Inheritances entirely depended upon it, and they were so careful herein, that their Genealogies were preserved to the destruction of *Jerusalem*; and if the Genealogies in *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* had been different from those in the publick Registers, this had for ever silenced and extinguished all pretences to our Saviour's being the Messiah; but they being exactly the same, did prove that the Prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in him. For the Virgin *Mary* being the only Child of her Father, it was lawful for her to be espoused to none out of her own Family, and there-

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(b) Lightf.
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fore the Pedigree of *Joseph*, as was customary in such cases, is set down, this shewing her Lineage and Family, as certainly as her own Pedigree could have done : for the poorest amongst the Jews observed the Law of Inheritances, as strictly as the rich, and even in exile it was observed as well as when they were in possession of their Inheritances, *Tob. vi. 10, 11.*

Isaiab had prophesied that the *Messias* should be born of a Virgin and (i) so his Prophecies had been constantly understood. And that a Virgin should bear a Son can seem to no man incredible, who will but consider, that the God of Nature cannot be confined to the Laws of his own institution, and that to make Man of the Dust of the Earth, or by other means than by natural Generation as the first Man and Woman must certainly be made whatever *Hypothesis* be admitted is as unaccountable and as wonderful as this can be. But to make this Conception of the Blessed Virgin the more easily believed, the Birth of *Isaac*, when his Mother *Sarah* was old, and had been barren, and other Births of the like nature, were both Types of Christ's Birth, and an evidence of the power of God above the course of Nature ; particularly *St. John Baptist*, being born of a Mother, who

(i) See *Bo. Pearson on the Creed.*

who was both old and barren, was in this as well as in other things, the fore-runner of Christ.

But this Virgin was to be espoused to *Joseph*, a just and good man, both that he might be a security and protection to her, and might be assisting to her, in her care and tenderness for the Blessed Infant ; and likewise that he, who was most concerned to make the discovery, if it had been otherwise, might testify to the world, that an Angel from Heaven had satisfied him ; that she was with Child of the H. Ghost. *Jealousy*, the wise man says, *is the rage of a man, therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance : he will not regard any ransom, neither will he be content, though thou givest him many gifts, Prov. vi. 34, 35.* And the Jewish Law in this case was as severe, as any could well be : For a Virgin betrothed, who had been thus found guilty, was to be stoned to Death, *Leut. xxii. 23.* And though *Joseph* not being willing to make her a publick example was minded to put her away privily, yet this shews, that if it had proved, as he at first suspected, he was not a man, that would have been insensible of the Injury ; and it is a good evidence, that there was nothing to be objected, when there was nothing that jealousy could object ; and no Testimony could possibly have satisfied those, who will not

be satisfied, though *Joseph* himself testified, that *the Angel of the Lord* appeared unto him in a *Dream* saying *Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee, Mary thy Wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.* And his carrying the Infant into *Egypt* at another appearance of an Angel, and all his Behaviour shews, that as he was the most competent person to deliver this Message of the Angel to the world, so he was the most zealous and forward asserter of this Article of our Faith.

And besides his first suspicions, his other prejudices and discouragements must be so great, that nothing but a clear and undoubted Revelation could possibly remove them; he could expect nothing but trouble and danger to himself; he could not hope to be reputed the Father of the *Messias*, since the Prophets had foretold, that he was to be born of a *Virgin*; and nothing could be more contrary to the expectation the Jews had of him, than that he should be a *Carpenter's Son*, this was thought by them a sufficient reason to reject both his Doctrine and his Miracles. And *Joseph* had no cause to flatter himself that it would be otherwise: *Simeon* prophesied of *Christ*, that he was set for a sign, which should be spoken against, and *Herod* presently seeks to take away his Life by a terrible Massacre: yet *Joseph* was so well

well satisfied of the Angels Revelation to him, and was so well assured of the certainty of it, that he willingly exposed himself to all the inconveniencies and dangers, which he could not but see must be the necessary consequence of it, and which he soon saw come so thick and violently upon him. *A Sword was to pierce through the Virgins own Soul also*: but all the hazards and the sorrows, which were foretold them, and which accordingly they underwent, may abundantly convince us, that they could have no design or prospect of any advantage, but of declaring the Truth, and of that Salvation, which was brought to them and to all Mankind by it.

Thus we see that both the Time and Place of our Saviour's Nativity, and the Person of whom he was born, are evident proofs of his being the *Christ*. He was to be born whilst the second Temple stood, he was to be born at *Bethlehem*, and he was to be born of a *Virgin* of the Tribe of *Judah*, and of the Lineage of *David*; all which most exactly agree in the Birth of our Saviour.

II. The Prophecies concerning the Life of the *Messias*, were fulfilled in our Saviour. The meanness and obscurity, and sorrows of it are exprest, *Isa. liii 23.* For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant,

and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no former comeliness : and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him, he was despised and we esteemed him not. His meekness and patience are described, *Isai.* xlii. 2, 3, 4. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the Street ; a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth ; he shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the Isles shall wait for his Law.* His abode was to be chiefly in Galilee, *Isai.* ix. 1. *Matt.* iv. 14. And accordingly he was brought up at Nazareth, and dwelt at Capernaum.

His miracles are every where inculcated by the Prophets, and this was so well understood by the Jews of that time, that many of the people believed in him upon the account of his Miracles, and said *when Christ cometh, shall he do greater Miracles than these, which this man hath done?* *Jo.* vii. 31. And when St. John Baptist sent two of his Disciples to enquire of our Saviour, whether he were the Christ, he gives them no other answer, but that they should acquaint John with what things they had seen and heard, how that the blind saw, the lame

lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, to the poor the Gospel was preached, *Luke* vii. 22. which was the literal fulfilling of that Prophecy, *Isaiab* xxxv. 5, 6. and it was the very character all the Prophets had given of the Messiah. St. John Baptist, whom *Josephus* gives a high commendation of, and whom all men looked upon as a Prophet, *Matt.* xxi. 26. had before declared Jesus to be the Christ, though he now sent two of his Disciples to enquire of him, not for his own, but for their satisfaction, that they might be witnesses, how the Prophecies were fulfilled in him. And both the Preaching and Baptism of John was preparatory to that of Christ, and was foretold by the Prophets, *Isa.* xl 3. *Malach* iv. 5.

But besides the Record of John the Holy Ghost gave witness to Christ, visibly descending upon him at his Baptism, with a voice from Heaven, pronouncing the words prophetically delivered before concerning the Messiah, which were always understood by the Jews to be meant of him, *Matt* iii. 13. and this voice was again repeated, though not so publicly as before, at his Transfiguration, *Matt.* xvii. 5. *2 Pet.* i. 17. and at a third time there came a voice to him from heaven, in the hearing of all the people, *Jo.* xii. 28. By the Hosanna's of the Multitude, and even of the

Children, and by his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, several known Prophecies concerning the Messias were fulfilled in him, *Matt. xxi. 16. Jo. ii. 17.*

III. The Prophecies concerning the Death of the Messias were fulfilled in our Saviour. His Death was foretold both in the writings of the Prophets, and by several Types or Actions, which did represent and prefigure his Death with the manner and circumstances of it, and this was one kind of Prophefying, by the resemblance of Actions and Things, as well as by descriptions in words. Thus *Abraham's* offering up *Isaac* was a Type of Christ's being offered upon the Cross, and *Isaac's* carrying the Wood on his Shoulders, was a Type of Christ's carrying his Cross. The lifting up the brazen Serpent in the wilderness was a Type of Christ's being lifted up, and the Paschal Lamb was a plain Type of the Sacrifice of Christ; and our Saviour Christ was sacrificed upon the Cross, at the very time of the Passover. A bone of him was not broken which was typified of him in the Paschal Lamb; the breaking of his Legs was prevented by his voluntarily giving up the Ghost, when he had so much strength and vigour after all his pains, as to cry out with a loud voice, which by the course of nature, a person who

who had endured so much before, and had hung bleeding and languishing for three hours at least upon the Cross till he expired by the force and extremity of his Torments, could not have done, and his being dead sooner than was expected, and sooner than the Malefactors were, caused the fulfilling this prophetic Type, *a Bone of him shall not be broken*, *Exod. xii. 46. Numb. ix. 12.* (i) He died likewise in the year of Jubilee, (as Dr. Lightfoot proves) by which the release and redemption, which he purchased for Mankind was typified: And as the fulfilling of these several Types concurred in our Saviour, so the fulfilling of them was brought to pass by the malice and cruelty of his Enemies, and of those very Jews, who had ever understood these Types to relate to the Messias.

The Prophecies in like manner were fulfilled in him, not by any design or contrivance of his own, but by the mere envy and malice of his Murtherers. The thirty pieces of Silver, for which he was betrayed, were by the Chief Priests given to buy the Pottersfield, by which was fulfilled a noted Prophecy, that stands recorded in the Book of *Zachariah*, but because *Jeremiah* had prophesied of the same thing before him, or for some other reason, it was better known among the Jews by

(k) *Light.*
Harm. N.
T. Sect.
lix. p. 243.

by the name of *Jeremiah's* Prophecy, unless, as some suppose, *Jeremy* be put for *Zachary* by a mistake of the Transcriber, which was obvious enough in transcribing the Abbreviation of the name of *Zachary*, as it is now to be seen in some of the Ancient MSs. *Z.* not much differing from *I.* Our Saviour was buffeted and spit upon according to a Prophecy of *Isaiab*, *Is.* 1. 6. He had Vinegar given him to drink mingled with Gall, and his Garments were parted amongst the Soldiers by casting of Lots, both which were foretold *Pf.* xxii. 18. *Is.* 53. 21. They pierced his hands and his feet, *Pf.* xxii. 16. They that pass'd by reviled him in the very words of the Psalmist, and in his Agony he cried out in the words of the same Psalm, *v.* 1. 7, 8. His death was voluntary, for though it was in the power of his Enemies to crucify him yet his Life was in his own power, which he resigned in the words of another Psalm, *Pf.* xxxi. 5. and he caused another Prophecy to be fulfilled by dying at that very point of time, which, if his death had been deferred a little longer had not been fulfilled; for the Soldiers broke the Legs of the two other that were crucified with them, but finding him dead, they broke not his Legs, though one of them suspecting that he could not be so soon dead, pierced his side, to try whether he were really dead

dead or not, by which that Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, *they stave loke on him, whom they pierced,* *Joh.* xix. 34. *Zach.* xii. 10. which (1) Text the Ancient Jews interpreted of the Messias. The liii Chapter (1) See Bp. Pearson. of *Isaiab* is a clear description of our Saviour's Passion almost in every circumstance of it. *He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was wounded for our Transgressions and bruised for our Iniquities; he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; his Silence being taken special notice of by Pilate himself, and his meekness towards Judas, his most ungrateful Disciple, is wonderful beyond all example. He made his Grave with the Rich in his Death, though he died in that shameful manner, under the imputation of so much wickedness, yet Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable Counsellor, was suffered by Pilate to bury him, which he did in his own new Tomb. He was numbred with the Transgressors, and in that sense made his Grave also with the wicked, being crucified between two Thieves; and so was not only reputed a Malefactor, and underwent the punishment of Transgressors, but was executed at the very time and place with them, and buried*

buried when they were. *He made intercession for the Transgressors*, for the Penitent Thief in particular, whom he promised, that he should be with him that day in Paradise, and for his Persecutors themselves, praying that they might be forgiven. The Prophecies of this Chapter are so very plainly and directly fulfilled, that I have known a Child apply them to the Passion of Christ.

One of the most glorious Characters, by which the Messias was described by the Prophets, was, that he should be their Prince and King, and this led the Jews into that fatal mistake of a Temporal Messias: for Messias or Anointed, signifies King as well as Prophet or Priest, (in which three Offices Unction was used, and they were all united in our Saviour, who was the Messias anointed and inaugurated by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him in a visible shape, and with a distinct and audible voice declaring him to be the Son of God. And that all the world might know our Saviour to be the King of the Jews, that Title was fixt upon his Cross in three several Languages, the most vulgar Tongues then in the world, that no Nation might be ignorant, that Christ the King of the Jews was then crucified. For *Pilate* would not alter the Inscription; but though they had frightened him before by observing

observing to him, that it was Treason against *Cæsar* to call any one King besides him, yet when they would now have had him change the Inscription, and have written only, *that he said, I am King of the Jews*, *Pilate* gave a short and resolute Answer, *what I have written, I have written*. How much soever it were at his Peril to provoke a malicious people, in a point, wherein they thought the honour and safety of their Nation so much concerned, and in a point, which could not but be exceeding tender to so jealous an Emperor as *Tiberius*; but *Pilate* had suffered himself to be carried too far already against his own Conscience, and had shewn great aversion to their proceedings, in the whole management of his Tryal; and the same providence, which had ordered every circumstance to the manifestation of the Truth, and the conviction both of the Jews and Gentiles, now so disposed this remarkable particular, that the last period of his Life, in opposition to all the spight of the Jews, should be adorned and dignified with his true Title and Character, under which he had been foretold by the Prophets, in Capital Letters upon his Cross

Thus were the Prophecies concerning the Birth, and Life, and Death of the Messias, exactly fulfilled in our Blessed Saviour,

viour, which were so many, that they could not be fulfilled by chance, and the fulfilling of them depended so much upon the words and actions of others, and even of his worst Enemies, that it could proceed from no design or contrivance of him or his Disciples: They were fulfilled in him by the malice chiefly of his Enemies, and according to the interpretation which they themselves were wont to give of them.

IV His Resurrection likewise and Ascension were the fulfilling of express Prophecies, as the Apostles proved to the face of his Crucifiers, *Act ii* And these were such Accomplishments of Prophecies as depended upon the sole Will and Power of Almighty God, and yet as certainly came to pass, as the Birth, and Life and Death of Christ did. As shall be proved in due place.

C H A P.

C H A P. XIII.

Of the Prophecies and Miracles of our Blessed Saviour.

AS our Blessed Saviour was prophesied of by all the Prophets who were before him so he was himself the Great Prophet that was to come, and was at the time of his being in the world expected of the Jews; and he fulfilled that Prediction by the many eminent prophecies which he spake. He foretold the Treachery of *Judas*, and *knew from the beginning who it was that should betray him*; he foretold the manner of his own Death, that it was to be by crucifixion, though the Jews often sought opportunities to put him to death privately, and that was a kind of punishment which the Jews could not inflict, but if they had killed him themselves, and had not brought him to the *Roman* Judicature, they would have done it by stoning, as they murdered *St Stephen*. He foretold all the circumstances of his sufferings, that *he should be delivered unto the Chief Priests, and unto the Scribes, and that they should condemn him to death, and should deliver him to the Gentiles, and that they should mock him, and should scourge him, and should spit upon him,* and

and should kill him, and that he would rise again the third day, Mark x. 33, 34. which his enemies took such notice of, that they used all their vain endeavours to prevent it. He assured his Disciples, that his Gospel should be preached over *the whole world*, and that one particular action, which they were offended at, of the Woman who anointed his head, should never be omitted, wheresoever it should be preached, *Matt. xxvi. 13.* he declared that his Religion should prevail against all the opposition which it would meet withal, and continue to the end of the world. He foretold the denial of *St. Peter*, and the manner of his Martyrdom, and both were foretold to *St. Peter* himself, and his denial, but a very little while before it came to pass, when *St. Peter* looked upon it as a thing impossible, who alone could have it in his power to hinder it. He Prophesied of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which came to pass about forty years after his own Death, within the compass of that Generation, as he had foretold: the very foundations of the Temple and City were destroyed, and the ground plowed up, so that one stone was not left upon another of all the magnificent Buildings of the Temple, which the Disciples so much admired, when our Saviour told them that this should be the Fate of that glorious Pile,

Pile, *Matt. xxii. 7.* And as I have already observed upon another occasion, when *Julian* with a design (a) to defeat this Prophecy, endeavoured to have it rebuilt, both the Works and the Workmen were miraculously destroyed by a fire bursting out of the ground. The Inhabitants fell by the edge of the Sword, and were led away captive into all Nations, *Luke xxi. 24.* the chiefest place of security was the mountainous part of *Judaea*, which our Saviour foresaw, when he advised his Disciples to flee to the Mountains, *Matt. xxiv. 16.* And *Cestius Gallus* compassed *Jerusalem* with his Army, which was a warning to the Christians to depart, and then by raising the Siege, gave them an opportunity to escape to *Pella*, in the Mountains of *Perea*, exactly according to *Luke xxi. 20, 21.* And what *Dion Cassius* relates in the Reigns of *Claudius*, *Nero*, *Vitellius*, and *Titus*, may serve as a comment upon our Saviour's Prophecy; for there were famines and pestilences, fearful sights and great signs from heaven, and great earthquakes, the sea and the waves roaring, *xxi. 11, 25.* The Sun was darkned, and the Moon did not give her light, *Matt. xxiv. 29.* Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which were coming on the earth, *Luke xxi. 26.* and there was so terrible an eruption of *Vesuvius*, that the Ashes were carried by

(a) *Πευ-
δεις ἀπε-
λέγει
τὰς τῆ
χρῆσῆ
προφήτεῖς
δοξοῦν.
ib. 5. c.
21.*

the winds into *Africk*, and into *Egypt* and *Syria*, with so great smoak and darkness, that it was thought the world had been at an end.

Our Saviour's Miracles verified the Prophecies, which had been concerning the *Messias*; for the Jews expected that the *Messias* should manifest himself by Miracles to the world, as they concluded from the ancient Prophets: and therefore *St. John Baptist* did no Miracles: that he might not be mistaken for the *Messias*, of whom Miracles were a principal Token to know him by. His Miracles were wrought in the midst of his Enemies, and extorted a confession from the Devils themselves of his *Divine Power*; they were of that nature, that it was impossible for them before whom they were wrought, to be imposed upon by them, and as impossible for them to be performed but by the immediate Power of God. The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes was twice repeated, and the persons who were witnesses to it, were at one time *five thousand men, besides women and children*, *Matt. xiv. 21.* and the other time *four thousand men, besides women and children*, *Matt. xv. 38.* a Miracle wrought at two several times, and obvious to all the senses of so many thousand Men, besides Women and Children, who being hungry, found themselves filled and satisfied

filled with this miraculous food in the barren wilderness, where it was impossible for them to be supplied by natural means, was impossible to be mistaken. The Miracles of our Saviour were so many, and so publick and undeniable, that *St. Peter* appeals to the Jews themselves, declaring that *Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of them, as they themselves also knew*, *Acts ii. 22.* The Nobleman's Son was cured at a distance, and the multitude were witnesses to the request he made to our Saviour, and to our Saviour's answer upon it, and the Nobleman's family were witnesses that the cure was effected at that very time. He cast Devils out of one known to have been a long time possess'd, and then suffered them to go into the Swine, to make it appear, that they were indeed evil Spirits, which had possess'd the man, contrary to the Doctrine of the *Sadducees*, who believed no such thing as Spirits. He cured the Leprosy and sent the cured to the Priest, as the Law required, that he by inspection might examine, whether it were a perfect cure or no. He gave sight to one born Blind, and this was upon examination attested to the *Pharisees* themselves. *Lazarus* was raised to life again, after he had been dead four days, before so many witnesses,

nesses, that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were not able to contradict the Truth of it, but were mightily enraged against him for it, and consulted to put *Lazarus* to death, because many were enticed to believe on Christ, by reason of so great and manifest a Miracle. Some who had been cured, and others who had been raised from the dead by our Saviour, were living for many years after, (b) as *Quadratus* testified of his own time, in his Apology to *Adrian* the Emperor. The circumstances of these, and the rest of our Saviours Miracles, shewed that they were really performed, and they were wrought with this intent and design to prove him to be the Christ. The nature therefore and end of them shews, that nothing less than a Divine Power could have effected them: For God would never have suffered them to be wrought to vouch an Imposture to the world under his own Name and Authority. (c) A learned Physician has written a Treatise to shew, that according to the Principles and Axioms of the best Physicians, all the Diseases, which our Saviour cured, were incurable by natural means, and it is evident to every man that many of them were so. But I shall insist more particularly upon the Resurrection of our Saviour, this being the most wonderful, and a confirmation of all his other Miracles, and of the whole Gospel to us.

C H A P.

C H A P. XIV.

Of the Resurrection of our B. Saviour.

THE Resurrection of our B. Saviour was prophesied of by *David*, *Psal.* xvi. 8. *Act.* ii. 27. And it was prefigured by the Type of *Isaac's* deliverance, when he had been offered up by *Abraham*, who both believed that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, and received him also from thence in a Figure, *Heb.* xi. 19. and it was also prefigured by the Type of *Jonas*, his being three days and three nights in the Whale's Belly, *Matt.* xii. 40. Our Saviour was three days and three nights in the Grave, (that is three *καθημερα*, or three natural days) according to the computation of the Jews in the eight days, which they reckoned for the circumcision of their Children, and in their other accounts: for they computed inclusively any part of the day, in which the Child was born for the whole: thus the (a) *Romans* computed their *Nundine* and their *Calends*, &c. And the *Olympiads* among the *Greeks* contained 5 years inclusively; and thus we call that *Tertian* Ague, which has but one days intermission.

a Annum ita dividunt, ut nonis modo diebus urbanas res usurparent reliquis vii ut rursus colerent. Var. de Re Rust. lib. ii. Praef. Τας πενταετηριων ετην ορισον επιλαβουσαν. Dionys. Halicarn. Antiqu. Rom. lib. vii.

But the Resurrection of Christ which was the Accomplishment of these Types and Prophecies being matter of fact, must be proved, as all other matters of fact are, by witnesses: and the Apostles in a body offered themselves as witnesses to testify this great Article of our Faith. *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, Act. ii. 32.* The thing therefore to be considered, is, whether they were effectually qualified to be witnesses in this matter, and to prove that they had all the qualifications which can be required in any witness, I shall shew, 1. That they had certain knowledge of the thing which they were witnesses of, and could not be deceived themselves in it. 2. That they would not deceive others, having no temptation to it, but acting against all the Interests and advantages of this world. 3. That they alledge such circumstances, as made it impossible for them to deceive those, to whom they testified the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, though they had had never so much mind to do it. And when men testify things, which they have such means and opportunities of knowing, as make it impossible for them to be mistaken in them, when they can have no advantage but by telling the Truth, and can expect nothing but sufferings from it in this Life, when they produce such circumstances

stances as put it out of their own power to deceive; and such as those, before whom they speak, may know to be false, if they be so; this certainly is all that can be desired in any witness.

I. The Apostles, who were witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection, could not be deceived themselves in it. They were ever far from being credulous, and easy of belief, as they shewed upon all occasions, and particularly they never could be brought to believe the Doctrine concerning the Resurrection of Christ, till their own senses had convinced them, but before they had wrong notions and apprehensions of it, and either misunderstood and misapplied all, that had been said to them about it, or whatever they knew, or believed concerning it before, they had no expectations of it when he was once dead.

Our Saviour had in express terms foretold his Resurrection upon the third day several times, *Matt. xvi. 21. xvii. 23. xx. 19.* But his Disciples did not rightly apprehend, or thoroughly consider what he said to them, though he express himself in the plainest words: For they were wholly taken up with great thoughts and expectations of an earthly Kingdom and of temporal Power and Honour; at one time *Peter took him, and began to rebuke him,*

saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee, Matt. xvi. 22. and at another time just before his passion, our Saviour had no sooner done speaking to them of his crucifixion, and his rising again the 3d day, but the two Sons of *Zebedee* petitioned, that *one might sit on the right hand, and the other on the left in his Kingdom,* and the rest of the Disciples were moved with indignation against them, for preferring such a Request; and it appears from our Saviour's discourse to them upon it, that their minds were all bent upon the thoughts of temporal Glory and Dominion, *Matt. xx. 20.* And after our Saviour had told them, that he must be put to death and rise again the third day, *St. Luke* adds, *that they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken, Luke xviii. 34.* and we find the same expression before, *Luke ix. 45.* Even after our Saviour had eaten the Passover with them, and instituted the Sacrament of his Body, which was just then to be given up and to be Crucified; and of his Blood, which was to be shed for them, they were still intent upon Temporal things, and had expectations of being advanced to places of Authority and Preheminence. *And there was a strife amongst them which of them should be accounted the greatest, Luke x. 36.* At his passion as one of them denied him thrice, so all the rest forsook him and fled. The

The Apostles and Evangelists write without any design, or any end to serve but that of telling the truth; and therefore they conceal nothing of their own failings and faults, though they might prove never so disgraceful to them; they acquaint us that they were ambitious, and had a vain prospect of Temporal Grandeur, that they were timorous, and of little Faith, till the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; which appears in nothing more than in this point of the Resurrection. They were men of no great natural Capacity, or quick apprehension, and they had sometimes found themselves mistaken in understanding that literally, which was spoken to them in Parables; and it is natural for men to run from one extrem to another, and usual for ignorant and unlearned men to imagine difficulties, where there are none: and this meeting with their wishes and longings after temporal Greatness, made hem take all that was said to them concerning the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, in some such sense as might answer their hopes and desires of temporal Felicity: but when his Crucifixion had undeceived them in this conceit, they were in such confusion and consternation of mind, as not to be able to recollect themselves, or to promise themselves any thing by his Resurrection, which they

they had no hopes or expectation of. The Spirits of men are commonly as low as their Education, and their condition and station in the world is, and are easily sunk and depressed much lower by any great and sudden calamity : and men, who were born in so mean a condition, and had entertained a conceit of great and vain hopes, and then as unexpectedly fell from them, must be so dejected at it, that it is no wonder that they thought of nothing but their sorrows, and had little heart to imagine any possibility of relief from the reviving of him, whom they had seen in that infamous and cruel manner put to death. They were so possess'd with an opinion of a temporal Kingdom, that when they had been convinced of the truth of his Resurrection, and had afterwards conversed a long time with him, they could not put it out of their minds, *act. i. 6.* and therefore it is no strange thing, that when they saw him dead and in the Grave, they were forsaken of all their former hopes of the Redemption of *Israel* by him, *Luke xxiv. 21.* which before they had imagined to themselves, was to be performed by his raising himself from that meanness to a Throne, not by his restoring himself to Life again. after he had been buried three days. The notion which the Jews had of a Resurrection, was only that
of

of the last day, *Job xi. 24.* and whatever was said of any other Resurrection, they looked upon it to be meant only in allusion to that : they questioned one with another what the rising from the dead should mean, they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him, *Mark ix. 10, 32.*

The Apostles therefore and other Disciples were so far from being credulous, or forward to believe the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, that they were not only inquisitive and careful not to be imposed upon, but they were exceeding diffident. The women that went to the Sepulchre, were so far from expecting to find him risen from the dead, that they carried with them a preparation of Spices to embalm his Corps, *Mar. xvi. 1.* and not finding the Body of the Lord Jesus, they were much perplex'd at it, not remembering the words, which Jesus had spoke to them concerning the Resurrection, till the two men, who stood by them in shining Garments, had put them in mind of them, *Luke xxiv. 4. 8.* But when they returned from the Sepulchre and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest, their words seem'd to them as idle tales, and they believ'd them not, *verse 9, 11.* And *Mary Magdalen* her self, though she had seen this vision, yet went to them with this complaint, *they have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre,*
and

300 *The Reasonableness and Certainty*

and we know not where they have laid him, Jo. xx. 2. Then Peter ran unto the Sepulchre, and stooping down beheld the Linen cloths laid by themselves, and departed wondering in himself at that which was come to pass, Luke xxiv. 12. St. John ran to the Sepulchre at the same time, and going into it saw and believed, but he declares, that as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead, Jo. xx. 8. 9. Mary Magdalen stands without still weeping, and complains to the two Angels, who asked her the cause, they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him, v. 13. and again to our Saviour himself, not knowing him, but supposing him to have been the Gardner, Sir, if thou have born him hence tell me where thou haste laid him, and I will take him away, v. 15. And after she was her self convinced of the Resurrection, when she told his Disciples, they believed not, Mark xvi. 11.

When our Saviour appeared to the two Disciples in the way to *Emaus*, he found them reasoning and talking together of all those things which had happened, and they were sorrowful at the thoughts of them, and when he enquired the reason, they give him such an account, as shews the doubtful and desponding apprehensions they had of their present condition, insomuch that he answers them with a severe

vere rebuke, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken, Luke xxiv. 25. And afterwards when these two were convinced themselves, and told the rest what had happened, neither believed they them, Mark xvi. 13. And when immediately upon this, Jesus stood in the midst of them, they were yet only terrified and frightned, and supposed, that they had seen a spirit, and when he spoke to them, and discoursed with them, why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have, and then shewed them his hands and his feet; yet still after all this, they believed not for joy but wondered, and were not settled in their Belief of what they had seen and heard, till he took meat and did eat it before them, Luke xxiv. 36. and then he opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and declared them the Witnesses of his Resurrection. And ye are witnesses of these things, v. 48.

After all these proofs, St. Thomas, one of the Twelve, not being with them when Jesus had appeared to them, the other Disciples told him, they had seen the Lord; but he was peremptory and resolute in it, that he would not believe him to be alive again.

again, except he should see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side. After eight days Jesus came to them again, and to convince St. Thomas, and take away all possible pretences of incredulity for the future, he grants him the satisfaction he desired, and says unto him: *Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing*: and St. Thomas, who before was so doubtful, is now fully convinced by this infallible evidence, and breaks out into this confession, *My Lord and my God*, Joh. xx. 27, 28.

Thus did Christ shew himself alive to his Apostles after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, Act. i. 3. and not of them only, but of above five hundred brethren at once, 1 Cor. xv. 6. But the Apostles were his chosen witnesses, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead, Act. x. 41. And when he ascended into Heaven, he was taken up while they were in his presence, and conveyed in a Cloud out of their sight; and whilst they were looking up after him stedfastly into Heaven, two Angels stood by them, and assured them, that as he ascended into Heaven, so he shall in like manner come down from thence

to

to judge the World. And he ascended not alone, but with a great multitude of the Saints and Heavenly Host, as we learn from a passage in a discourse of the Apostle (b) St. Thaddæus preserved by Eusebius. After his Ascension he was seen not only by St. Stephen to comfort and support him at his Martyrdom; but by St. Paul, who was thereby stop't in the full speed of his persecutions: his conversion was so sudden and so powerful, that that alone might be thought sufficient; but to give him the compleat qualifications of an Apostle to become a witness of Christ's being risen from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, he was pleased to appear to him from thence.

All circumstances therefore concur to shew, that the Apostles had sufficient opportunity fully to inform themselves in all particulars; that they used all means to do it with their utmost care and diligence; that they were suspicious and distrustful; and that nothing but the clear conviction of all their senses, could have satisfied them. The Apostles had conversed with our Saviour for some years, and had seen his Miracles, and had been enabled by him to do the like, and they were never credulous, but always backward and slow of belief; and the Resurrection of Christ was a surprizing thing to them:

(b) Κατέ-
βη μὲν ὁ
κύριος δὲ
μετὰ πολλοῦ
ἀριθμοῦ
ἁγγέλων.
Euseb.
Hist. lib.
i. c. ut.

them : For though he had often plainly foretold it to them, yet the disappointment of their hopes of a Temporal Kingdom, and the great terrour and consternation that his death had put them into, had quite broke their Spirits, and thrust all hopes or thoughts of a Resurrection out of their minds, and they were very hardly brought to a belief of it. But he overcame their unbelief, and satisfied all their scruples, by such ways as must be convincing, or else we can never be convinced, that there is any real man besides our selves in the World, and that all the rest are no mere Shadows and Ghosts; they *did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead*; they all beheld the marks in his hands and in his side and one of them, who would not otherwise be perswaded to the belief of his Resurrection, did thrust his fingers into the Print of the Nails, by which he was fastned to the Cross, and his hand into the wound of his side, which was made by the Soldiers Spear, just before he was taken down from it; so that they knew him as certainly to be risen again, as they had ever known him to be alive before his Death.

The Apostles were so diffident, that our Saviour *upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them, which had seen him after he was*
risen

risen, Mark xvi. 14. But it is observable, that as St. Thomas was at first absent, and was suffered afterwards to be so very difficult of Belief; so it is said of the two Disciples, that were walking to *Emaus*, that *their eyes were holden, that they should not know him*. It was purposely so ordered by the Divine Providence, that they might not readily know and acknowledge him, but that the manner of his Manifestation of himself to them might be an invincible argument against all opposers, that no man might have any thing to object, when every circumstance was as narrowly examined, and with as great caution and circumspection and diffidence, as it could have been done by himself, if he had been there. For I think, we may challenge the boldest and subtillest Adversary to say, what he could have done more to discover the Truth, if he had been then living, and amongst the Apostles, than was done by them. *That, which we have heard, says St. John, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of Life, (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness——) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you,*

1 Joh. 1. 2, 3. which is all that is possible for any witness to say, as to any matter of Fact; and they, who could speak and write

in this manner, must be competent witnesses; if no other exception can lye against them, they certainly speak home to the purpose and all that any witness can be desired or supposed to speak.

II. As the Apostles could not be deceived themselves, so they would not deceive others, having no temptation to it, but acting against all the Interests, and advantages of this world. And those, who had denied or forsook Christ when he was living, would never have been so zealous and resolute to suffer for him after he was crucified, if they had not been fully assured of his Resurrection. It is not to be imagined, they would have suffered all manner of Torments and Deaths, only to bear witness to a thing, they had known to be false; and it has been already proved that they could not be deceived in it, but must have known it to be false, if it had been so; and therefore it must be true that Christ is risen from the dead, or else we must suppose the Apostles to have been of so different a nature from all the rest of Mankind, as to delight in the things, which all others fear and abhor, even in bonds and imprisonments, in infamy and torments, and all the punishments that can be inflicted: he that would endure all these for the sake of what he knew to be false, must surely not be of humane nature;

ture; and we may as well doubt, whether the Apostles were men, as we are, as whether Christ did rise from the dead.

III. They alledged such circumstances, as made it impossible for them to deceive those, to whom they testified the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, though they had had never so much mind to do it. They declared that that Jesus whom the Jews had caused to be crucified, and had then placed a Guard of Soldiers to secure his Sepulchre, lest his disciples should take him away, was notwithstanding all their care risen from the dead; and that that Report of the Jews, that his Disciples came by night and stole him away while the Watch slept, was utterly false; nay that it was a suborned story, and that the Chief Priests had given the Soldiers Money to say it. Now if Christ had not really been risen, how easily had all this been disproved, and what a Provocation was this to the chief Priests to disprove it? If they could, their Honour and Reputation, and their Interest with the People, was highly concerned to vindicate the Truth of the Report, which they had hired the Souldiers to give out; and if there had been no such Report, what reason could *St. Matthew* have to pretend there was? And if against all Reason and common sense,

sense, he had pretended such a report, when there had been none, it must have been the greatest disservice to his Cause, that could have been thought of. But when there was such a report amongst the Jews, that his Disciples had stoln him away by night, if this could have been made good against them, would his Disciples so soon after in the very City where he had been crucified, declare to the Face of the Chief Priests assembled in Counsel, *the God of our Fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a Tree, him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, and to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, and we are his witnesses of these things,* Acts v. 30. 31, 32. Was not this as much as could be said, to challenge them to produce those Soldiers, to confront them? But besides the senseless story, that men should be able to know what was done, when they confess themselves to have been asleep; the Apostles could soon have confuted that calumny by the Miracles, which they wrought by virtue of his Resurrection: if the Soldiers had been asleep, when the Body was taken away, yet the Jews were certainly awake, when they invented and spread the report, and when they saw the Miracles, and heard the strange Languages, by which the Apostles proved it to be false, and

and declared, that Christ was risen by the Omnipotent Power of God.

Besides, St. *Matthew* writes, that *the Graves were opened, and many bodies of Saints which slept, arose and appeared unto many,* Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. Many saw them, who are appealed to as witnesses of their Resurrection. And the miraculous events at the death of our Saviour, which were so many certain presages and fore-runners of his Resurrection; as the Earthquake, and the darkness of the Sun for three hours together, in the midst of the day, contrary to the course of Nature, the Moon being in the full; the rending the veil of the Temple, and the like; these were things which must be notorious, and which could not have been pretended to have happened, but the whole people of the *Jews* must be appealed to, as witnesses of them.

And it being a custom for the Deputies of Provinces to certify the Emperor of whatever happened considerable under their Government, the Resurrection of our Saviour, with the Miracles which accompanied it, were so remarkable, that *Pontius Pilate* gave an account both of his Miracles and his Resurrection to the Emperor *Tiberius*; who thereupon proposed it to the Senate, to have him taken into the number of their Gods, and made it punishable to accuse any man for being a

(d) Justin.
Apol. ii.
Tertul. A
pol. c. ii.
& cxi.

Christian during his Reign. And this information of *Pontius Pilate* was entred upon Record at *Rome*; to which *Justin Martyr* appeals, in his Apology to the Emperor *Antoninus Pius*, and the Senate; and *Tertullian* in his Apology, which was likewise presented to the Senate of *Rome*, or at least to the Governours of the Provinces. They both lived in the next Age, and were both educated in a different Religion, and upon these and such like proofs, became Christians; and they were men of excellent Learning and Judgment: but no man, who could write an Apology, can be supposed to have so much confidence, and so little understanding, as to appeal to that account which *Pilate* sent to *Tiberius*, concerning the Resurrection of Christ, in Apologies dedicated and presented to the *Roman* Emperor himself, and to the Senate, or the chief Magistrates of the Empire, if no such account had ever been sent, or none had been then extant to be produced. But, by the special Providence of God, both the Birth and the Resurrection of our Saviour were inserted into the publick Records at *Rome*, and were to be seen there for a long time after; and the Heathens, in whose custody they were, are desired. By the Primitive Christians to consult them: for they were content to put the matter upon this issue, that

that if they were resolved not to believe what the Christians said, yet they would at least credit their own Records.

Upon these Proofs and Reasons, by the clear evidence and power of Truth, the word of God mightily grew and prevailed, against all that Prejudice and Malice, and every Vice could do to oppose it, in *Rome* and in *Jerusalem* itself: for in this very City, where our Saviour had been Crucified, and where it had been impossible to have made Profelytes, if his Resurrection had not been evidently proved beyond all possibility of a confutation great numbers were daily added to the Church. A Church was forthwith founded at *Jerusalem*, and a Bishop appointed by the Apostles, and both the body of the People, and their (e) Bishops, being xv. in number, to the final Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Adrian*, were Jews by Nation.

(e) Euseb.
Hist. li. 1.
c. 5.

We see then, that as the Testimony of the Apostles is in itself beyond all exception, so it is of such a nature, as to make it impossible for them to deceive, if they had intended it; but indeed no men could have proceeded in that manner, or would have endeavoured it, who had had any intentions to deceive; and the event shewed, that it was the direct and plain evidence, and force of Truth, which supported itself, notwithstanding all the pre-

judices and advantages, which its worst Adversaries had against it.

C H A P. XV.

Of the Apostles and Evangelists.

THe Principal Articles of the Christian Faith being matters of Fact, as the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, upon which the rest depend; the great thing to be enquired into is, whether the Apostles had all the qualifications requisite to become witnesses of matters of Fact. This has been already shewn as to the Resurrection, and if in general we examine whether we may safely rely upon that credibility wherewith they preached the Gospel to the world, the enquiry will fall under these heads; I. Whether they were men of sufficient Abilities to discern and understand what they testified. II. Whether they had sufficient means and opportunities to know it. III. Whether they were men of Integrity, that without Artifice or Design, truly declared what they knew.

I. That the Apostles were men of sufficient understanding to become witnesses of a matter of Fact, was never doubted by any

any one, nor can it be questioned by such as peruse their Writings: and indeed who is there of any common sense, that is not a competent witness of what he sees, and hears, and has the experience of, for so long time together? For,

II. By their conversation with our Saviour, both before his Passion, and after his Resurrection, the Apostles had such opportunities of knowing what they attested, that it was impossible for them to be deceived in any part of it. It was a necessary qualification of all the twelve Apostles, that they should have conversed with our Saviour before his Death, and have seen him after his Resurrection. For when one was to be ordained in the room of *Judas*, to be a witness with the rest of Christ's Resurrection, he was to be one, that had *companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the Baptism of John unto that same day, that he was taken up from them, Act. i. 21, 22.* They saw his Miracles, and heard his Doctrine, and knew his manner of Life, and had all the opportunities, and used all the means to inform themselves that it was possible for men to do: they were *eye-witnesses of his Majesty, 2 Pet i. 16. they had heard, and seen with their eyes, and had looked upon, or beheld and discerned for a long time together, and their hands had*

had handled that, which was the subject of their Testimony, 1 *Joh. i. 1, 2, 3.* They had made all the search into it, and had used all the exactness that could be, and were as distrustful and as hard of belief, as any men could have been, who are most suspicious and jealous of being imposed upon. And of these Apostles, two wrote the Life of our Saviour, and all bore witness to the Truth of what these wrote, and preached the same things, where-ever they came: Of the two other Evangelists, *St. Mark* had his information from *St. Peter*, whose Disciple and Companion he was, and *St. Luke* wrote his Gospel from the account he had of those who were *eye-witnesses and ministers of the word*, *Luke i. 2.* And he was the Companion and Disciple of *St. Paul*, who was such an enemy to Christianity before his Conversion, that nothing less than a miraculous Power could have made that sudden change in him; he probably must have seen our Saviour before his Passion, and then saw him again at his Conversion, and heard him speaking to him from Heaven: So that *St. Paul*, as well as the other twelve Apostles, had seen and heard our Saviour, and they were all convinced by their own senses of what they delivered to others; and besides these, he was seen after his Resurrection by many others, both men and women,

women, and at one time was seen by above five hundred together, 1 *Cor. xv. 6.* Of all the writers of the Books of the New Testament, there are but two who were not eye-witnesses to what they relate, and these two had their Relations from the Apostles and others, who were eye-witnesses.

III. The Apostles were men of integrity, and without any Artifice or Design, truly declared what they knew. 1. They had no worldly Interest to advance by their Testimony, but suffered by it, and had a certain prospect of suffering. 2. There are peculiar marks of sincerity in all their writings.

I. They had no worldly interest to serve by their Testimony, but suffered by it, and had a certain prospect of sufferings. They could propose no advantage to themselves of Gain, or Honours, or Pleasures; but on the contrary, underwent a voluntary Poverty, and Infamy, and Torments, which was all that they met with in this world for their Pains, and all that they could expect to meet with. They forsook all which they had; *St. Matthew* a gainful Employment, and *St. Paul*, who wrote the most of any of the Penmen of the New Testament, lost the favour of the Chief Priests, and the preferments, which a person of his Learning and Zeal might promise

promise himself from them. *St. Luke*, a Physician by his profession, left an employment both of Honour and Advantage, and the rest lost all they had, and can any man lose more? All of them left an honest and secure livelihood, and exposed themselves to the hatred and contempt of all their nearest Friends and Relations, whose love and esteem, both by nature and education, they must be inclined most to desire: and they became obnoxious to all the affronts, and outrage, and torments, which a furious zeal could inflict upon them. All which was no new or unexpected thing to them; they saw what their Master had suffered, and could hope to fare no better than he had done. They were often forewarned by Christ long before hand, what must befall them, they were told that they must take up their Cross and follow him, and could be his Disciples upon no easier terms. He had set forth the reception which they must expect to meet with in the world, just in the same manner as they found it, under the most significant appearance that words could represent. And this they soon found as punctually true, as all the rest that he had foretold to them: but though they found it so, and sometimes were dismissed with a severe charge to desist from preaching the Gospel, and at other times escaped, and had

had an opportunity given them to avoid any further danger by preaching it; they ever persevered in it with the greatest zeal and constancy, despising all dangers, and all sorts of torments and deaths, and glorying still and rejoicing, that they suffered in so good a Cause; and at last they sealed their Doctrine with their Blood.

St. Paul was in great reputation with the Chief Priests and Scribes and Pharisees before his conversion, and was employed by them in persecuting the Church, and as often as he appeared before them, they had nothing to accuse him of but his profession of a Religion, which obliges all men to the strictest justice and holiness. If the Apostles had not been the best, they must have been the worst of men for imposing upon the world, under the presence of a Divine Mission and Authority; and yet this they must do with no other design, but to promote virtue and holiness; which no ill man could design, to his own certain loss and destruction in this world and the next: and the less men believe of the next world, the more fond they are to make sure of this.

Ambition, and a desire of Fame, and a Name after Death, rarely happens to men of obscure Birth and mean Education; and it was naturally impossible, that it should now befall so many of them, without any ground or reason to expect it, when in all humane

humane consideration they had a certain prospect of nothing but infamy after death, as well as of disgrace, and want and torment, during their lives. And no man could resolve upon attesting any thing on such terms, unless he had been absolutely certain of the Truth of it, much less could so many set upon such a design together: for as they could have no arguments to persuade one another to enter upon such an Attempt, so if they had once conspir'd in it, they would soon have deserted and discovered each other, when they lay under all the disadvantages and difficulties imaginable, and had nothing to support and unite them, but the truth and reality of what they delivered. And it is further observable, that in the first Ages of the Church, and the nearer Christians were to the Apostles, the more zealous they were to live according to the Gospel of Christ, and to die in defence of it: for they had then greater opportunities of informing themselves of the Imposture, if there had been any, and had therefore the greater means of being certified that there was none. And men of great parts and Accomplishments, such as *Sergius Paulus*, Governour of *Cyprus*, *Dionysius the Areopagite*, *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian* and others, who were inquisitive men, and able to make a true judgment of things, upon a

full

full examination of all particulars, became early Converts to the Christian Religion.

II. There are peculiar marks of sincerity in all the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. They were not ambitious of being known to the world by their writings but wrote only as they were (a) by necessity drawn to it, for the further propagation of the Gospel. And upon all occasions they declare their own frailties and faults, and many times such as could never have been known but from themselves. St. *Matthew* had spent the former part of his Life in no very creditable employment, but among Publicans and Sinners, as he says himself: for he leaves recorded to all Posterity, the censure of his own Life, saying, that he *sat at the receipt of custom*, Matt. ix. 9, 10. and stiling himself *Matthew the Publican*, Matt. x. 3. *Eusebius* observes that none of the other Evangelists have mentioned a thing so reproachful of him, as his having been a Publican, but St. *Matthew* only has written it of himself: For it was the opinion not

(a) Euseb.
Eccle. hist.
lib. iii. 231

(b) Euseb.
Demonstr.
lib. iii. c. 15.
Orig. contra
Cels. lib.
i. Heracl.
apud Clem.
Alex. str.
lib. 4. Grot.
ad Matt.
ix. 9.

only of *Eusebius*, (b) but of *Origen*, and of *Heracleon*, that St. *Matthew* and *Levi* mentioned, *Mark* ii. 14. *Luke* v. 27. were two different persons; and *Grotius* is of the same opinion. Or if *Matthew* and *Levi* were the same person, St. *Mark* writes,

that

that Jesus sat at meat in Levi's house; and St. Luke, that Levi made him a great Feast in his own house; but St. Matthew says only, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, not mentioning in whose house, though he omits nothing that the others set down, but the mention of his own Hospitality.

In St. Mark's Gospel, (c) which was written from the account, that that Evangelist had from St. Peter, when St. Peter answered our Saviour, that he was the Christ, no further is said of our Saviour's reply, but that he charged them that they should tell no man of him, Mark viii. 30. St. Peter, omitting that honourable character given him by our Saviour, and the Power of the Keys bestowed upon that occasion, which is at large related by St. Matthew, Mat. xvi. 16. But immediately after St. Peter's behaviour towards our Saviour is fully related; which was so unseemly, as that he began even to rebuke Christ for speaking of his sufferings, and extorted that severe rebuke from meekness itself, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* This St. Peter has left written of himself by St. Mark, who wrote by the approbation and direction of St. Peter; but the honourable part is past over in silence, though belonging to the same time and place. So again, the Denial of St. Peter is related in all its circumstances of aggravation, by St.

(c) Tertull.
a. iv. Marc.
lib. iv. c. 5.

St. Mark as well as by St. Matthew: and St. John, Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. John xviii. He acquaints us, that without any Torments or Menaces, or the least compulsion at the bare question of a poor Maid, he denying his Master, and that he denied him thrice, and the last time even with Oaths and Imprecations. A man, that delivers these things of himself, plainly shews, that he is so far from all vanity and seeking his own praise, that he can be supposed to have no other aim or design, but to declare the Truth to the Glory of God and the benefit of Mankind, though it prove to be never so much to his own disgrace. And they relate, that as soon as our Saviour was apprehended, all his Disciples forsook him and fled, when they might have been able to have witnessed in his behalf, and to have confronted Judas, who they might well believe, would have turned his Accuser, after he had betrayed him. But St. Peter soon repented, and both he and St. John took courage and returned to see what became of their Master, and both St. Peter's denial, and their leaving their Master thus in his distress, might never have been known, unless they had discovered it themselves.

The Reproofs, and sometimes very severe Reprehensions, which were given them by Christ, could never have come to

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our knowledge but by their own information, as that they were blamed for having little Faith, *Matt. xvi. 8.* no Faith, *Mark ix. 19.* that our Saviour upbraided them with unbelief and hardness of heart, *Mark vi. 52. viii. 17. xvi. 14.* for being foolish and slow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken, *Luk. xxiv. 25.* They declare, that they were ambitious, and emulous and fond of Temporal Honours; that they had very wrong Notions of Christ and his Kingdom, and they set forth at large how timorous, and how difficult they were of belief, and how very scrupulous and diffident of Christ's Resurrection.

St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, as St. Peter was the Apostle of the Circumcision, by his Disciple and Companion St. Luke has likewise left an account of himself, which none but a sincere honest man, regardless of his own praise, would ever have suffered to be given of him, St. Luke says, that the witnesses against St. Stephen, laid down their cloaths at a young man's feet, whose name was Paul, *Acts vii. 58.* and that he was consenting to St. Stephen's death, which he repeats twice, and once from St. Paul's own mouth in his Speech to the Jews, *Acts viii. 1. xxii. 20.* He says, that St. Paul made havock of the Church, *Acts viii. 3.* and breathing out

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threatnings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord went unto the high Priest, and desired of him Letters to Damascus, *Acts ix. 1.* These are not the words of one, that had a design to dissemble or extenuate in favour of any one. And out of a deep sense of this offence, though it were committed ignorantly in unbelief, St. Paul declares himself to be the least of the Apostles, and not meet to be called an Apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God, *1 Cor. xv. 9.* and at another time styles himself less than the least of all Saints, *Eph. iii. 8* and chief of sinners, *1 Tim. i. 15.* ascribing all to the Power and Grace of God. St. Luke relates, that there was a sharp contention between St. Paul and St. Barnabas, *Acts xv. 39.* and St. Paul tells the Galatians, that he had withstood St. Peter to the face, *Gal. ii. 11, 14.* So plain it is that they did not act by any confederacy between themselves, and that the Truth was dearer to them than any thing besides. In the mean time the Apostles have left behind them little or no account of their journeyings and labours and sufferings, only St. Paul mentions some things of himself upon a necessary occasion; the rest we have from St. Luke, and he speaks chiefly of St. Paul, and of him only till his first coming to Rome, and of St. Peter very little in comparison; of the rest of the

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Apostles scarce any thing in particular : so little design had they of propagating themselves a name to posterity.

St. Paul used all lawful compliances, and he, who when the honour of Religion was concerned, made so stout opposition to St. Peter himself, at other times, when he might safely do it, *became all things to all men.* And he joyns others together with himself in the beginning of many of his Epistles, *1 Cor. i. 1. 2 Cor. i. 1. Gal. i. 1. Colos. i. 1. 1 Thess. i. 1. 2 Thess. i. 1. Philemon i.* which was a great condescension, and a kind of communicating his Authority to them, whom he took, as it were, into commission with himself. But when through the malice and insinuations of false Apostles he was forced to speak in his own defence, he does it with great unwillingness, and calls it folly and *confidence of boasting, 2 Cor. xi. 1, 17.* and if he *must needs glory, he will glory in the things which concern his infirmities, 2 Cor. xi. 30.* And at the same time he confesses *there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the Messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, and declares himself to be nothing, 2 Cor. xii. 5, 7, 11.* He gives all the Glory to God, magnifying his Office, and the Grace, which enabled him in the administration of it: and as upon all other occasions he speaks with the greatest

greatest abasement of himself: so when the importunate malice of his Enemies constrained him to it and the Glory of God and the Salvation of Men required him to speak something less submissively of himself, he discovers his great humility in that he used so much caution, and put in so many lessening and abating Clauses, that the Glory might redound to God and not to himself: insomuch that it appears to have been one of the greatest instances of the Humiliation and self-denial of so truly humble and holy a man, to be forced to speak things which might seem boasting, and make him incur the censure of Pride and Folly. But he was willing to be counted vain and proud for the sake of the Gospel, and had so far mortified all pride and vain Glory, as to be contented upon so just an account, to incur the disgrace of being supposed guilty of it. For there can be no higher instance of a truly humble and pious mind, than to forgo the esteem and reputation of being thought so, when the Glory of God and Charity to the Souls of men require it; he is not thoroughly humble, who in such a case would not be thought proud, but his very Humility is matter of pride to him, and it is the last degree of vanity, which an humble man can part with, to be desirous not to be esteemed proud. The Truth is, if it were not for the pride

of men, there would be no need of greater caution and reservedness, when we speak of our selves, than when we speak of others, but men would speak the truth of themselves and others with the same freedom and plainness. So that this was an infallible argument of the integrity and sincerity of the Apostles, that they spoke always what was proper and seasonable to be spoken, the praise or dispraise of themselves, or others was not their business, but the Glory of God and the good of Men.

They write no Encomiums upon one another, nor upon their Master himself, and they write no invectives upon their worst Enemies, *Judas* and *Herod*, and *Pontius Pilate*, but set down plain Truth and Matter of Fact, whoever is concerned with the same simplicity, with which they tell their own faults.

What qualifications then can be desired in any witness, which do not all concur in the Apostles and Evangelists? The Apostles shew by their Writings, that they were men of understanding sufficient to apprehend the things they attest and write about, and indeed, what man of any understanding is not capable of witnessing that to be true, which he sees and hears, and perceives with every sense? They had all the advantages and opportunities that ever any witnesses could have, to know
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what they said to be true; and they were plain men without Art or Disguise, bred up most of them to mean and laborious Callings, and they had no expectations of any thing but sufferings in this Life, and therefore were as far from any Temptation as from any possibility of imposing upon the World, and they set down their own faults upon all occasions as particularly, as they do whatever else they relate, having no regard to any thing but Truth.

C H A P. XVI.

Of the Prophecies and Miracles of the Apostles, &c.

THERE had been a long cessation or intermission both of Prophecies and Miracles in the Jewish Church till the coming of Christ, but by the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, the Prophecy of *Joel* was fulfilled, and the Spirit of God was poured out in greater abundance, than ever it had been before, in bestowing the gifts of Miracles and of Prophecy in a more eminent manner, and to greater numbers of men, and those of all Nations, than had ever been done at any time before: for these were *the latter days*,

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days, the last distinction of Time, or the last period of the World, in which God had purposed to reveal himself; and this being the last was in all respects the fullest and most perfect Revelation.

I. A Spirit of Prophecy was bestowed upon the Apostles and others. A Famine (a) taken notice of by Heathen Authors, which happened throughout all the world in the days of *Claudius Caesar* was prophesied of by *Agabus*, *Acts* xi. 28. and the same Prophet, both by Actions, and in express Words signified, that *St. Paul* should be bound at *Jerusalem*, and delivered to the Gentiles, *Acts* xxi. 11. which was likewise foretold by others, even in every City where that Apostle came, *Acts* xx. 23. *St. Paul* himself foretold his own afflictions, *1 Thes.* iii. 4. He foretold to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, that men would soon arise even from among themselves, who would divide and disturb the Church, *Acts* xx. 29. 30. and he foretold the same, *1 Tim.* iv. 3. *2 Tim.* iii. 1. *St. Peter* declared that *in the last days there would come Scoffers walking after their own lusts*, *2 Pet.* iii. 3 which prophecy *St. Jude* saw fulfilled in his time, *Jude* 18. and God knows, we see it fulfilled in ours. For the Scoffers at Religion would do well to consider, that all their mockery and affronts are so far from doing any prejudice to Religion, that

(a) Sueton
in Claudio
& Dom.
Cass.

that they by that very means fulfil a Prophecy, and add a confirmation to it, when they think themselves most successful against it. *St. Paul* forewarns the *Thessalonians* of the lying wonders and strong delusions and notorious wickedness, which would break in upon the Church at the coming of Antichrist *2 Thes.* ii. 3. and that this accordingly came to pass *St. John* witnesseth, saying, that even then there were many Antichrists, *1 John* ii. 18. iv. 3. *2 John* 7. And though it be variously disputed, who is the Antichrist, *1 John* ii. 22. *2 John* 7. supposed to be the Beast, *Rev.* xiii. Yet that the Prophecies concerning the Delusions, and the impieties and cruelties of Antichrist express'd in the Texts now mentioned, and more fully described in the Revelation of *St. John*, have been in great measure already accomplished, will admit of no dispute; and the gradual and repeated accomplishment of them in divers Ages, and in so many instances, is that which has caused so much variety of opinion in this matter. Learned men easily mistaking some of these many Antichrists for the Beast, or the great Antichrist. In the Revelation of *St. John* we have the state and events in the Church described, and many things contained in it we know to be come to pass, as what concerns the seven Churches of *Asia*, &c. and

(b) Euseb.
Eccles. Hist.
lib. iii. c.
36.
lib. iv. c.
18,
lib. v. c. 7.

and the obscurity of other places is elsewhere to be accounted for. (b) *Quadratus* had this gift of Prophecy, and it continued in the Church to the time of *Justin Martyr*, and of *Irenæus*.

II. The Miracles wrought by the Apostles were according to an express promise of Christ to them, that after his Ascension they should do even greater Works than he had done himself, *John* xiv. 12. that is, they should do works that would be more eminent and observable in the eyes of the World, though not more excellent and divine; for nothing could be greater in that sense than to raise a man from the dead. Which promise was fulfilled to them at the Feast of *Pentecost*, when men from all parts of the world were made witnesses to it. For they were commanded by our Saviour not to depart from *Jerusalem*, but to wait for this promise, and he assured them, that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days after his being taken up from them into Heaven, and that they should receive power after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them, and should be witnesses unto him both in *Jerusalem*, and in all *Judæa*, and in *Samaria*, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth, *Acts* i. 4, 5, 8. And this miraculous power was visibly bestowed not only upon the Apostles themselves, but upon the

(c) hun-

(c) hundred and twenty mentioned, *Acts* i. 15. (c) Monstrabatur locus, ubi super centum viginti credentium animas spiritus sanctus descendisset. Hieron. Epitaph Paulæ. vid. Dr. Light's exercit. or. Act. ii. 2. p. 643.

I have already shewn that the Apostles were effectually qualified to be witnesses of what they delivered concerning Christ, and that they could neither be deceived themselves in it, nor could propose any advantage to themselves by deceiving others; and that if they had designed any deceit, they alledged such circumstances as made it impossible for them to have past undiscovered. All which will be exceedingly confirmed by considering the miraculous Gifts, which the Apostles received by the descent of the Holy Ghost, according to this promise of our Saviour. I shall therefore shew how the Apostles were enabled by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them to become witnesses to Christ. 1. By the Miracles which they wrought themselves. 2. By that power which was conveyed by them to others of working Miracles. 3. By their supernatural Resolution, Courage, and Patience under their sufferings.

I. The Apostles were enabled to become witnesses to Christ, by the Miracles which they wrote themselves. This power of Miracles qualified them most effectually to be witnesses of the Resurrection and Ascension and other Articles of our Faith: for they could neither deceive nor be de-

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ceived in these miraculous Gifts, which were bestowed upon them, to be an assurance to themselves, and an evidence to others, that it was the Cause of God in which they were engaged, and his truth which they delivered.

They could not be deceived themselves undoubtedly in a thing of this nature, they could not be ignorant, whether they were real Miracles which they wrought or not; they must needs know whether their own pretences were true or false; and whether they could speak the Languages, and do the Wonders, which the world believed them to do and speak; and they could not but know by what power and means they were enabled to perform all their miraculous Works.

And these works were of that nature, and done in that manner, that they could impose upon no man by them; they could not make men believe that they spoke all kinds of Languages, if they did not speak them, nor that they cured all sorts of Diseases, if they had not cured them: nothing is more easy than for a man to know a Language that he understands, when he hears it, or than for men that were sick to know that they are recovered, when they feel themselves well. And the manner of their performing these Miracles, was the most publick and notorious in respect
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of the time and place, and the persons on whom they were wrought.

Our Saviour had been crucified at the Feast of the Passover in the sight of the Jews and Profelytes, who were met together from all parts of the World at that Solemnity: and but fifty days after at the next solemn Festival of the Jews, in the very same City where he had been crucified, in the presence of multitudes of people of all Nations and Languages, which came to keep the Feast of *Pentecost*, the Apostles declared to them in all their several Tongues, that this same Jesus was by the Almighty Power of God raised from the dead, and that they were empowered by him to speak all those Languages. The Apostles were at the same time taken notice of to be *Gallileans*, men of low Birth and of now Education. *St. John* in particular was known to the High Priest himself, and the rest were all known to many that heard them; their Parentage, and place of Abode, and manner of Life might easily be enquired into: for they were no strangers, nor in a far Country: and from all these it appeared that it was impossible that they should be capable of speaking any of these Languages but by inspiration, and to speak all Languages, is a thing which no man ever could hope to arrive at by study or conversation, though he should

should make it the whole business of his Life : and therefore this could least of all be suspected of men of mean Employments, and who got their Livelihood by their daily labour and industry.

The Miracles which the Apostles wrought were likewise in the most publick places of the City, and in the most publick manner, upon persons who had been most remarkable, and generally taken notice of for their Infirmities. St. Peter, by pronouncing only these words, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk*, cured a man of above forty years of Age, who was known to have been lame from his Birth, and was carried and laid daily at one of the Gates of the Temple, where there was wont to be the greatest resort of people, to ask an Alms of them, that entred into the Temple ; and this man being immediately cured, went with St. Peter and St. John into the Temple, and all the people saw him walking and praising God, and they knew that it was he, which sat for Alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, Acts iii. 9, 10. And the Rulers of the Jews enquired into the matter, and upon examination, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus, and beholding the man which

was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it, but confessed among themselves, that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it, Acts iv. 13, 14, 16.

By this and other evident and publick Miracles the miraculous Power of the Apostles became so much admired and magnified by the people, that they brought forth the sick into the Streets, and laid them on Beds and Couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the Cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick Folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one, Acts v. 15, 16. And in this manner the Apostles continued several years in Jerusalem, doing Miracles upon all occasions, and before all people. And the same miraculous power manifested it self at Ephesus, where God wrought special Miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them, Acts xix. 11, 12. So impossible was it for the Apostles to deceive those, before whom their Miracles were so frequently and publickly wrought. And yet it must be much more impossible, if any thing more

impossible can be supposed, to deceive those, upon whom their Miracles had the effect of restoring to them the use of their feet, their sight, and their health, and even of raising them again from the dead.

And indeed none of the Adversaries of old of the Christian Religion ever denied, but that Miracles were wrought by the Apostles; they only disputed the Power, by which they were wrought; they never questioned the reality of the Miracles themselves. The Books of the New Testament, which give an account of these wondrous works, were written soon after the things related had been done, and these Books were in the hands of Heathens and Jews as well as Christians; and neither the Jews nor the Heathens could deny but that such works had been done, they only cavilled at the Power and Authority, by which they were wrought, which, how groundless and unreasonable soever it were, yet was the only evasion they could have; when there were so many Christians, if they had denied the matter of Fact, who did the like Miracles every day to confute them. For,

II. The Apostles not only wrought Miracles themselves, but conveyed to others a power of working them. Thus when St Peter was sent for to *Cornelius*, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word, and

and they spake with Tongues, and magnified God, Act. x. 44, 46. And so at *Ephesus*, the H. Ghost came on those whom St Paul had laid his hands upon, and they spake with Tongues and Prophefied, Acts xix. 6. And this miraculous Power was in that evident manner received by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, that *Simon Magus* offered them Money to purchase it, Acts viii. 18. Now as the Apostles could neither be deceived themselves in the Miracles which they did, nor deceive those, before whom they were performed, and upon whom they were wrought; so certainly they could never deceive such as they conferred this Gift upon. When they not only did all sorts of Miracles, and spoke all Languages themselves, but conveyed a Power likewise upon others of speaking and doing, as themselves did, this was still a further evidence that all their pretences were real beyond all possibility of Deceit.

Deceivers would never have done their Miracles so openly, and so frequently, at such a time and place; they would never have pretended to a gift of Tongues at a Festival, where men from all parts of the world were met together; so that they could attempt to speak in no strange language, but some present would have discovered them, if they had not been

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able to speak it. But they would least of all have pretended to enable others in an instant, to work the same wonders, and speak the same Tongues, only by laying their hands upon them. Men that would attempt all this, though they were unable to perform it, must be so far from being capable of discoursing and writing as the Apostles did, that they must be void even of common sense: and if they could succeed in their designs, and make the world believe that they did act and speak in this manner, when they did not, they must have a Power over the understandings and senses of all with whom they conversed; which is as strange even as this Miraculous Power itself. They must work Miracles either upon the objects of sense, or upon the senses themselves: for in this case they could never have been able so much as to deceive without a Miracle; and since God would never have empowered them to work Miracles to deceive, we are certain that their Miracles were all wrought for that intent and purpose, which they made profession of, and to confirm that Doctrine which they taught.

And this Power of Miracles, which now descended from Heaven upon the Apostles, and was conveyed by them to others, continued for some Ages in the Church, and approved it self to the worst Enemies
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of our Religion in such instances, as must make them most concerned to examine it. (d) Several of the Primitive Writers witness, that nothing was more notorious, than that the Devils were wont to cry out for very anguish and torment, when they were adjured by the true God, (e) and *Tertullian* made publick challenges to the Heathens, that if they would but admit them to this Tryal, the Christians would undertake to make their most famous Deities acknowledge the Power of Christ, and to make their very Gods confess themselves to be wicked and seducing Spirits, or else they would be contented to be slain upon the place; and this he wrote under persecutions, and in Apologies dedicated and presented to their Persecutors themselves.

And indeed the Oracles in all parts of the World soon began to fail, so as they had been never known to do before: for their Power began to abate and decay upon the approach of our Saviours Birth into the World, till by degrees they quite ceased, which the Heathens wondered at, and were much perplext about it, as we learn from what (f) they have left written upon that subject. And though *Julian* the Apostate used all the ways that he could think of, to bring them into credit again, he was never able to effect it, but

(d) Minut. Felix. Lactant. lib. ii. c. 15. & c. 21.

(e) Apo- log. c. 23.

(f) Cicero. de Divinat. Platarch. de Oracl. Defectu.

the most famous of them confess'd to him, when he consulted it, that a miraculous and Divine Power residing in the Remains of a Christian Martyr after his Death, would suffer no answer to be given. And it is so remarkable, that I must mention it once more, that when the same Apostate Emperor, in hatred and despite to the Christian Religion, became a great Patron of the Jews, and encouraged them to re-build their Temple, great balls of fire broke forth under the foundation, and destroyed both the work it self and the persons employed in it. And this we have related, not only by several Christian Writers that lived about that time, but by an (g) Heathen Historian, who was then living and wrote the History of those times, and has shewn himself in no respect over favourable to the Christians, but was a Soldier under *Julian*, and had no inclination to say any thing that might seem to diminish his Character. The Judgments also which befell several of the greatest Persecutors of the Christian Religion, were so miraculous and so terrible, as to extort a confession from some of them of God's Justice in their Punishment, and to force them to re-call their persecuting Edicts and change them for others in favour of Christianity. (h) The Edicts of *Maximianus* and *Maximin* to this purpose are to be

(g) *Ambr. n*
Marcellin.
b. xliii.
c. 1.

(h) *Euseb.*
Hist. lib.
viii. c. 17.
ix. c. 12.
Lactant. de
Mortib.
Persecut. c.
xxxiv. 49.

seen

seen in *Eusebius*: and (i) the Judgment upon *Julian* was so sudden and so remarkable, that some of the Heathen cavilled, that the God of the Christians had not shewn that Mercy and forbearance, which they reported of him in it.

(i) *Hieron.*
in Hab. c.
iii.

And when the Power of Miracles which came down on the day of *Pentecost* upon the Apostles, and was continued in the Church after them, thus manifested it self in opposition to the pretences both of the Jews and Heathens in such a manner, as must provoke them to make all the discoveries they possibly could, concerning it, when it thus triumphed over all the Gods of the Heathens, whilst its poor and persecuted Professors were under the feet of the Heathen Emperors, and lay continually exposed to their cruelties, and at the peril of their Lives proffered in public Apologies by a miraculous Power, or, as the Apostle speaks, by the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit, to prove their own Religion true, and theirs false, and its cruelest Persecutors were by miraculous Judgments forced to become its Protectors; this was all that could be desired towards the fulfilling the Promise of our Saviour to his Apostles, that they should become his witnesses to all Nations. But,

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III. The Gospel could not have been thus propagated unless this Power of the Holy Ghost had been still further manifest, by the courage and resolution, and patience of the Apostles under their sufferings. Our Saviour tells them, that they should receive power after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them, to become witnesses unto him, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria; these were the places where our Saviour himself had wrought his Miracles, and where he had been hated and persecuted, and at last crucified; and there is reason to believe, that the Apostles went not from Jerusalem and the parts adjacent, (k) till twelve years after his Ascension: and when they had testified his Resurrection, and preached his Gospel to the Jews, their work was not yet at an end, but they were to be his witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the Earth, and even thither several of them went fearing no dangers, and being discouraged at no sufferings.

There is a natural boldness and courage in some men by which they are often carried both to do and to endure a great deal more than others: but it was not so with the Apostles, they were naturally very timorous and faint hearted, they all forsook their Master and fled, when he was first apprehended, and then were very backward to believe his Resurrection; and when

when they and the rest of the Disciples were convinced of it, they did not preach it to others, but after he had been seen of them forty days, and discoursed with them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, they still had mistaken notions and expectations concerning it: when they therefore were come together they asked of him, saying, Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel. And when Christ was taken up from them, into Heaven, they stood gazing up after him, not knowing what to think of it, till two Angels admonished them, that it was in vain for them to stand looking thus any longer: and after his Ascension they staid ten days before they ventured to publish any thing of what had come to pass, till on the day of Pentecost in a visible and audible manner, the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and quite changed their temper, and of the most timorous made them the most courageous and resolute, inspiring them with a Divine Vigor and presence of mind.

For of all their Miracles few seem to have been more wonderful than that firmness and constancy of mind, which men so low and mean and abject, and before so fearful, as the Apostles were, now shewed upon all occasions. When our Saviour spoke to these his poor Disciples, and

(k) Matth.
Iiii. lxxv.
c. 18.

commanded them to *go and teach all Nations*, Matt. xxviii. 19. it was such a command as no King nor Law-giver ever presumed to give, in the height of all his Power and Greatness: and when God himself sent *Moses* to the Children of *Israel* only, *Moses* feared the success, and would fain have declined the Message. And how might the Disciples have replied to our Saviour, how shall we preach to the *Romans*, and dispute with the *Græcians*, and discourse with the most remote and barbarous Nations, who have been bred up in the knowledge only of our own Native Tongue? How can we compel all Nations to forsake the worship of the Gods of their several Countries, and to observe all things whatsoever we are commanded to teach them? With what force of Eloquence are we fitted for such a design? What hope can we have to succeed in an attempt to set up Laws in opposition to the Laws established for so many Ages in behalf of their own Gods? What strength can we have to overcome such difficulties, and to accomplish such an Enterprize? But they made no objections, our Saviour had conversed with them forty days, after his Resurrection, and now tells them, that all Power is given unto him in Heaven and in Earth, and he commands them *not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the*

the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me, Acts i. 4. And when the Holy Ghost was come, they were endued by him with a courage and resolution almost as wonderful, as the Miracles they wrought, to perform the great work which lay before them: they were not in the least daunted at any dangers, or torments, or deaths, but went on courageously in their Duty, by the power and assistance of the H. Ghost, by whom they were enabled to bring the world to the obedience of the Gospel of Christ: They opposed themselves to all the assaults of Men and Devils: Nothing could now discourage them, who before were so timorous and unbelieving, the coming of the H. Ghost down upon them, wrought a mighty change in them, who were to work as great an alteration in all the world besides. *St. Peter* standing with the Eleven *lift up his voice*, he spoke with wonderful Resolution, and the rest stood by to bear witness to the Truth of what he said. They stood now undaunted by, to testify that their Master was again alive, who had forsaken him as soon as he was apprehended, and he that before so shamefully denied him thrice, being startled and affrighted at the Question of the High Priest's Maid, now speaks aloud in a vast concourse of people, with so much steadfastness, that this alone was a sufficient evidence

vidence of the truth of what he delivered. They were not in the least concerned at the mockery and abuses that were put upon them, the Spirit had descended on them, and raised them above such mean and foolish apprehensions, they were now full of the H. Ghost, and no worldly thoughts could move them, they acted with the force and vigor of the Wind and Fire, in which the Holy Ghost came upon them, and with as much unconcernedness, as if they had had no difficulties to encounter: the world they very well knew, and found was against them, but they had the assurance of his help, who had overcome the world. They were pressed on every side, with want and disgrace, and all manner of hardships; some mocked and reviled them, others tormented them; the rage, the tumults, the conspiracies of whole Cities and Countries broke loose upon them. all the malice and contrivance of Men and Devils was joined against them; and yet with what freedom doth St. Peter speak? *Ye men of Israel hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye your selves also know: him being delivered by the determinate Counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up, whereof*

we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear, Acts ii. 22, 23, 24, 32, 33. And in the third Chapter, The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy one, and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses, Acts iii. 13, 14, 15. And before the Council, O ye Rulers of the People and Elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought by you Builders, which is become the head of the corner, neither is there Salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 8. &c. And again, The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a Tree: him hath God exalted with his

right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, and we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him, Act. v. 30, &c. With what freedom and authority doth he now speak, how unlike is he now to the man he was before, when he thrice denied his Master whilst alive? And what could make such an alteration in him after his Masters death but a supernatural Power? What could cause him thus frequently and earnestly to make an open confession of him in the midst of the people, and before their Council, if he had not known him to be risen from the dead, and had not done all his Miracles by virtue of that Power, which was bestowed upon him and the rest of the Apostles, after Christ's Ascension?

And the same constancy and greatness of mind appeared in St. Stephen, and the rest of the Disciples; which yet was accompanied with equal humility and meekness. *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard, Acts iv. 19, 20.* You may do your pleasure, but we must do our duty. Nothing of fury and violence, nor of wiliness and extravagancy, but a constant composedness and gravity,
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and a rational sober zeal appeared in all their behaviour. They told a plain truth, and then wrought Miracles to confirm it, and afterwards suffered any torments rather than they would renounce it, or desist from preaching it. Though they could cure all Diseases, and dispossess Devils, and raise men from the dead, or take away their Lives with a word speaking, as in the case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*; yet they were not exempted from sufferings, because we must then have wanted one great argument for the confirmation of our Faith. And the Gospel was to be founded upon principles of Love and Goodness, not of Fear and Astonishment; and there is something in the sufferings of good men, which is apt mightily to work upon the affections, and upon any seeds of good nature in us: and therefore when by their Miracles they had raised the admiration of the Beholders, and convinced them of the Power by which they were wrought, their patience under sufferings not only confirmed them in the truth of Religion, but laid the foundations of a Religious Life, in gaining upon the inclinations and affections, and in calming the spirits and preparing them by so great examples of patience to endure all the calamities incident to men. Who is there, that is not more affected with the meek
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and humble courage, and invincible patience of the Apostles, than with all the great Acts of the mighty conquerours and destroyers of Mankind? A few, poor, unarmed, defenceless men stand before armed Multitudes and speak with as much Authority, as if all the Power of the world were in their hands; and indeed all power was in their hands, in as much as he assisted and inspired them, who is above all. They speak to Multitudes with as much freedom as to one man, and to all Nations with as much ease, as to one people.

And the same Holy Spirit, who descended upon the rest of the Apostles on the day of *Pentecost*, descended upon St. Paul at his conversion, and gave that great Apostle so much confidence and resolution, so much patience and zeal under his sufferings which were so severe and terrible, that we can scarce read them with so little horror, as he underwent them.

Thus did the Holy Ghost fit and prepare the Apostles to be witnesses to Christ by inspiring them with all that courage and patience, which was necessary for men, that were to declare an ungrateful and despised truth amongst those, who would think themselves so much concerned to oppose and suppress it. If they had wrought no Miracles, their courage and resolution might have pass'd for a groundless confidence,

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and if they had not had the courage to stand so resolutely to the truth of what they delivered, their Miracles themselves might have become suspected; but acting by a Divine Power. and being supported in all their sufferings by a supernatural constancy and greatness of Mind, and being so suddenly changed and raised above themselves in all they did or suffered, and working the same change in others; they gave all the evidence and certainty of the truth of the Doctrines they taught, that it was possible for men to give.

And as a power of working Miracles was derived from the Apostles down upon their Disciples, so was the spirit of meekness and patience under afflictions communicated to them. And it is observable, that God was pleased not to raise up any Christian Emperor, till above three hundred years after Christ, that he might shew that the Religion which came from heaven, could need no human aid nor be suppress'd by any human force; and that he might recommend the great virtues of meekness and patience to the world by the examples of men as eminent for these, as for the Miracles they wrought, and might instruct mankind in a suffering Religion. For to assure the world of the truth of it, he would not grant it protection from Christian Emperors, till most of the Empire was

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(l) Euseb.
Hist. lib.
viii. c. 1.

become Christian, and Christianity had diffused itself into all the known parts of the Earth. For before the last Persecution, begun by *Dioclesian*, (l) the Church flourished as much, and had the favour of the Court, and of great men, in as high a degree almost, as under *Constantine* himself; till their Prosperity caused their sins, and these brought Persecution. But at last the persecuting Emperors were forced by a divine power, manifested in miraculous diseases inflicted on them, to restore the Christians to their former liberty, in their worship of God; that so it might appear to all the world, that the Christian Religion needed no Patronage of men; for God would compel its worst Enemies to become its Protectors, when he saw it fitting. And (m) when *Julian* made it his great aim and business to restore Paganism again in the world, he saw, to his grief, how ineffectual all his endeavours proved; he observed that the Christian Religion still retained a general esteem and approbation, and that the Wives and Children and Servants of his own Priests themselves were most of them Christians.

(m) So-
zom. lib. v.
c. 16.

If any one then, upon a serious consideration of all circumstances, can withstand the conviction of so great evidence; I would only ask him, whether he believes any History, or relation of matters of fact,
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which he never saw, and desire him to shew what degrees of certainty he can discern in any of them, which are not to be found here: and besides to consider, that if in a vicious and subtile Age, a Doctrine so contrary to flesh and blood, by so weak and incompetent means, could obtain so universally amongst men of all Tempers, and Professions, and Interests, in all Nations of the world, against so violent opposition, without the help of Miracles; this is as great a Miracle as can be conceived: either therefore the Christian Religion was propagated by Miracles, or it was not; if it was, then the Miracles, by which it was propagated, prove it to be from God; if it was not propagated by Miracles, the Propagation itself is a Miracle, and sufficient to prove it to be from him.

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CHAP.

C H A P. XVII.

Of the Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists.

It is justly esteemed a sufficient reason for the credibility of any History, if it be written by men of Integrity, men who have no suspicion upon them of dishonesty and have no Temptation to deceive, and who relate nothing, but of their own Times, and within their own knowledge, though the Authors never suffered any loss, nor run any hazard in asserting what they deliver. But the History of Christ has this further advantage, that many of the most considerable things in it were done in the sight of his enemies, and that which is an History to future Ages, was rather an Appeal to that Age, whether the things related were true, or not.

The History of our Saviour's Life and Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension, as it hath been proved, was attested by his Apostles, to the faces of his very Crucifixion; and they all remained upon the place, where what they witnessed had been done, for several years afterwards, declaring and preaching to all people, the things

things which they had seen and heard. And soon after his Ascension, when all the proceedings against him were fresh in memory, they committed the same to writing in *Greek*, which was the most common language, and generally known at that time. St. *Matthew*, who first penned his Gospel, is said to have written it in *Hebrew* or *Syriack*, (tho it was soon after translated into *Greek*) so that whoever of the *Jews* did not understand the *Greek* tongue, might read the Gospel in their own Language. Not long after the other Gospels were penned, and they were all in a short time dispersed into the several parts of the world, and translated into all Languages. It is particularly related, (a) that St. *John's* Gospel, and the *Acts of the Apostles* were soon translated into the *Hebrew* tongue. (a) Epi-phanus, ref. Elicon.

The Evangelists give such an account both of the Birth and Death of our Saviour, as must suppose them recorded at *Rome*. For there the censual Tables were kept, where, by St. *Luke's* account, the name of our Saviour must have been registered; and his Death and Resurrection were so remarkable, as they relate them. that according to the custom used in the Government of the *Roman* Provinces, the Emperor must have a relation sent him of them, and (as I have shewn) both *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian* appeal to the *Ro-*

man Records for the truth both of the Birth and Resurrection of our Saviour. The memory of the Massacre of the Infants by *Herod* is preserved to us by a saying of *Augustus* concerning *Herod* upon it (b), which is mentioned in *Macrobius* a Heathen Author. For *Augustus* was told, that among others, *Herod* had caused his own child to be slain; which, whether true or no, gave occasion to the Emperor to make this observation, that it was better to be *Herod's* Swine than his Son. *Tacitus* mentions our Saviour's suffering under *Pontius Pilate*, and *Tertullian* in his (c) Apology tells the Heathens that the miraculous Eclipse of the Sun, which was at Christ's Death, stood upon Record in their own Registers; whether it were for the strangeness of the thing, it being contrary to the course of Nature, or that their superstition had made it customary to register all the Eclipses which happened.

The dumbness of *Zacharias* till the Circumcision of his Son *John the Baptist*, was a notorious publick thing, and the people who waited for him, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the Temple, perceived at his coming out, that he had seen a Vision, and all things relating to that History were raised abroad through all the hill country of *Judea*, Luke i. 21. That the wise men came from the East at the sight of the Star;

(b) *Macrobius*.
Saturnal.
lib. ii. c. 4.

(c) *Tertullian*.
Apology.

Star; that *Herod* heard of this, and was troubled at it, and all *Jerusalem* with him; That he gathered all the Chief Priests and Scribes together, and demanded of them where Christ should be born; and that they answered, At *Bethlehem* of *Judea*, citing the Prophecy of *Micah*; That *Herod*, when he had enquired of the wise men concerning the Star, and enjoined them to bring him word where the young child was, being disappointed by their returning home another way, slew all the children that were in *Bethlehem*, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under; these are things of that publick nature, that it was impossible they should be feigned, when *St. Matthew's* Gospel was first published. If they had not been true, thousands must have been able to contradict them, and discover the falsehood of them. When matters of fact are related, with so many manifest and publick circumstances, it is an appeal to the world for the Truth of what is written; and no man of common sense would contrive a false story with such publick circumstances, as that every Reader may be able to disprove it. If any man should affirm, that in such a City or Village in *England*, at the command of such a King, and at such a time, within our memory, all the Infants, from two years old and under, were murdered, he must scarce expect to

be believed, or to confirm any thing else he has to deliver, by such a fiction to introduce it.

The Triumphant shouts and *Hosanna's* of the multitude at Christ's entrance into *Jerusalem*, whereby *all the City was moved*, Matt. xxi. 10, 11. immediately before the Passover, when there was the greatest concourse of people, was a thing that could not soon be forgotten: at the same time he drove out all that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the Tables of the Money changers; and when he was in the Temple, the blind and the lame came to him and he healed them; and the chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the Children crying in the Temple *Hosannas to the Son of David*, and they were sore displeas'd at it. The Evangelists would never have brought in the Chief Priests and Scribes themselves, with the whole people of *Jerusalem*, and the vast numbers of Jews and Profelytes out of all Nations, assembled at the Passover, as spectators and witnesses of these things, if they had not been so certain of them as to appeal to them all for the truth of what they relate so lately, and so solemnly and publickly done.

The darkness of the whole earth for three hours together in the midst of the day, the veil of the Temple's being rent from

from the top to the bottom, the Earthquake, and the rending of the Rocks, and the opening of the Graves, are things that must have been generally known, and could not be feigned; or if any man can be so vain as to imagine they might; let him but consider, whether such things could now be imposed upon any people, by the writings of a few men, as done in the Metropolis of a Nation, at a solemn time, within the memory of thousands yet living, who are able to contradict them from their own certain knowledge. If a man should pretend, that but a few years ago in the chief City of any Kingdom or Nation, one part of the principal Church was rent from the bottom to the top by an Earthquake, which tore asunder the Rocks, and opened the Graves of the dead, and that at the same time, the Moon being in that position, that the Sun could suffer no Eclipse, the Sun was darkned from twelve at Noon to three in the Afternoon, could he hope to gain any credit or belief to any Doctrine he had to propagate, by feigning such circumstances, as would put it into the power of every man that heard of them to disprove him? Would not this be the readiest and the most effectual way he could possibly invent, to expose himself and his Cause?

The Death of *Judas*, and the cause and manner of it, which is so clear a vindication of our Saviour, and so plain a proof that he is the Christ, *was known unto all the dwellers of Jerusalem, in so much as that field was called in their proper tongue Aceldama, that is to say, the field of Blood, Acts i. 19. Matt. xxvii. 8.* If this field had not been so called, and this had not been well known at *Jerusalem*, would any man have written in this manner?

And besides the XII. Apostles, and the LXX Disciples, who all believed and attested the truths contained in the Evangelists, many persons of Authority and Note among the Jews are mentioned, who would have found themselves concerned to disprove what is related, if it had been false. *Nicodemus* is said to have come to Christ by night, who was a Pharisee and a Ruler of the Jews, *John iii. 2. vii. 50. xix. 39.* and to put this mark upon him three several times, That he came to Jesus by night, and durst not own his coming to him, was no flattering character, or such as might engage *Nicodemus* or his friends to dissemble the injury, if it had not been true that *Nicodemus* was his Disciple. The like is said of *Joseph of Arimathea*, a rich man and an honourable Counsellour, *Matt. xxvii. 57. Mar. xv. 43.* that he was a Disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,

Jews, John xix. 38. Herod and Pontius Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas: and several other persons particularly named, and most of them with no commendation, but with that Character, which the Truth of the History required, would be concerned themselves, or their Friends and Relations for them after their decease, to expose any falshood, that could have been discovered in the History of our Saviour.

The other Books of the New Testament are explicatory and consequential to the Gospel or History of Christ; and besides they contain many memorable and publick Facts, as the speaking of all sorts of Languages, and working all kinds of Miracles at the solemn Feast of *Pentecost*; and the conversion of many thousands thereby, the frequent examination of the Apostles before the Council at *Jerusalem*, their Preachings and Miracles in the most publick places, as in the Temple, in the Streets, &c. these are things that could not be imposed upon the world in that very place, and in defiance of that very people, before whom they are said to have been done. *Gamaliel, Dionysius the Areopagite, Sergius Paulus, Simon Magus, Felix, King Agrippa, Tertullius, Gallio,* and others, were Names of too great Note and Fame to be used in a false story, in which they are so much concerned. And all their Proceedings in the

the Courts of Judicature were kept upon record, and therefore could not be pretended (without being discovered) by those, who always had so many Adversaries.

The Miraculous power bestowed upon the Apostles was chiefly employed in curing Diseases, and for the health and preservation of Mankind, but they had a power of inflicting Diseases likewise and death it self upon just occasions, as in the case of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, *Act* v. of *Elymas* the Sorcerer, *Act* xiii and the incestuous *Corinthian* *1 Cor* v And when this was done by private men and divulged to the world, with the names of the persons who inflicted diseases and death it self, and of those, on whom they were inflicted, this is an evidence both of the truth of the matter of Fact, and of the power by which it was done: for no Author could think to serve his Friend or his Cause by relating things of this nature, unless they had been evidently done in a miraculous manner, and by a Divine Commission and Authority.

The Conversion of *St. Paul* was a thing so memorable, both for the manner of it, and for the business he was going about, and the persons that employed him, and for his known zeal at other times in persecuting the Church, that *St. Paul* appeals to
King

King *Agrippa*, as one, who could not be ignorant of a thing so notorious, *Act* xxvi. 26. and it was the great providence and wisdom of God, that a man so well known and esteemed by the Pharisees and Chief Priests before his conversion, should be the greatest instrument both by his preaching and writings for the propagation of the Gospel; and both his Epistles and the other Books of H. Scripture have the same proof from the observations already mentioned, concerning the names and characters of persons, and other circumstances. And they were always read in the Assemblies of Christians, and were appointed to be read in them, *Coloss.* iv. 16. *1 Thess.* v. 27. And the writings both of him, and of the Evangelists, and the other Apostles, are cited by Authors contemporary with the Apostles, by *Barnabas* an Apostle himself, and by *Clemens Romanus*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, &c. and they have been acknowledged to be the genuine works of those whose names they bear, both by Jews and Heathens, and particularly by *Tryphon* the Jew, in his Dialogue with *Justin Martyr*; and by *Julian* (e) the Apostate. It is enough in this place to observe, that (ex-
cepting some very few Books, of which an account shall elsewhere be given) the Books of the Scriptures of the New Testament have been received as genuine from
their

(e) Apoc. Cyril. lib. x

their first appearance in the world, during the Lives of their several Authors, and have been delivered down for such through the several ages of the Church. In the main they have been so unanimously received, and so fully attested by Christians, that the Jews and Heathens themselves never denied them to be genuine, nor ever pretended the principal matters of Fact to be false or doubtful. Many of the Eye-witnesses to the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles lived to a great Age, St. John himself above an hundred years, and he preached the Gospel above seventy years. Simeon the Son of Cleopas, lived to an hundred and twenty years, and Polycarp the Disciple of St. John to fourscore and six, of whom (f) Irenæus in his Epistle to Florinus a Marcionite declared, that he remembered exactly what he had heard Polycarp discourse, concerning the account of the Miracles and Doctrine of our Saviour, which he had received from St. John and others, who had conversed with Christ and that it differed in nothing from the Scriptures.

And besides the inspired Writings, the chief points of the Christian Religion were testified in Apologies written from time to time to the Heathen Emperors themselves.

(g) Quadratus, Bishop of Athens, in his Apology to Adrian declared, that persons who

Euseb. lib. iii. c. 29.

(f) Id. lib. v. c. 20.

(g) Euseb. Hist. lib. iv. c. 2. vid. Irenæ. lib. iii. c. 57.

who had been healed by our Saviour, and others that had been raised from the dead by him, were still living in his time. Aristides presented an Apology to the same Emperor. Justin Martyr wrote two Apologies, the first dedicated to Antoninus Pius and his two Sons, and the Roman Senate; the latter to M. Antoninus and the Senate; (h) Melito Bishop of Sardis, and Apollinaris Bishop of Hierapolis, likewise wrote a Vindication of the Christian Religion to M. Antoninus: Athenagoras offered his Apology to M. Aurelius and Commodus, (i) Meltiades to Commodus, or to the Deputies of the Provinces. (k) Apollonius, a Roman Senator, made a publick defence of the Christian Religion in the Senate of Rome, and Tertullian presented his Apology to the Senate, or to the Governors of the Provinces. And the Apologists did not dwell only upon generals, but descended to such particulars, as to appeal to the publick Records for the truth of what they delivered concerning the place of our Saviour's Birth, and the manner of his Death and his Resurrection: so that the principles and foundations of the Christian Religion, were from the beginning asserted in publick Writings, dedicated and presented to the Heathen themselves, who were most concerned and most capable of disproving it, if it had been false.

(l) And

(h) Euseb. lib. iv. c. 26.

(i) Euseb. lib. v. c.

17. (k) Hist. Catal.

Euseb. lib. v. c. 21.

(1) Euseb. lib. ix. c. 5. & 10. (1) And though the Acts which were forged under the Emperor *Maximin*, and pretended to be *Pilate's*, were by his command sent into all the Provinces of his Empire, and published in all places, and ordered to be taught Children, and to be learnt by heart by them, yet all this malicious care and contrivance was ineffectual to the suppressing the Truth of the History of our Saviour, which was so well attested, and so fully published amongst all sorts of men, that it was impossible to extirpate the belief of it. And this Emperor himself (as I before shewed) was by miraculous Diseases inflicted on him, forced to retract by a publick Edict, his practices against Christianity, and to acknowledge that his sins and blasphemies against Christ, were the just cause of his Punishment.

C H A P.

C H A P XVIII.

Of the Doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures.

THE Scriptures must be acknowledged by all considerate men, to contain excellent Rules and Precepts for the Government of our Lives, and it cannot be denied that it is to these we owe the Peace and Happiness we enjoy, even in this world. It is therefore the interest of every good and prudent man to wish the Christian Religion true, though it were not so, and there can be no cause to wish it false, but our own sin and folly. And this of it self is a good argument that it is true, because it is for the benefit of Mankind that it should be so, and upon that account it carries the visible Characters of Divine Wisdom and Goodness in it: for it is certain, that the Religion, which God has established in the World, must be of this nature, that none but wicked men can dislike it, and that all sober and good men must be well satisfied with it, and mightily enclined to believe it, nay even the worst men must be forced to confess, that they owe their own safety and protection to the Doctrines of it. And that
such

such is the nature of the Christian Religion, will be evident, if we consider that, I. It teacheth an universal Righteousness both towards God and Man. II. It layeth down the only true Principles of Holiness. III. It proposeth the most effectual Motives. IV. It affords the greatest helps and assistances to an Holy Life. V. It expresseth the greatest compassion and condescension to our infirmities. VI. The propagation of the Gospel has had mighty effects towards the Reformation and Happiness of Mankind. VII. The highest mysteries of the Christian Religion are not merely speculative, but have a necessary relation to Practice, and were revealed for the advancement of Piety and Virtue amongst men.

I. The Christian Religion teacheth an Universal Righteousness both towards God and Man. It teacheth us the nature of God, that he is a Spirit, and therefore ought to be worshiped in Spirit and in Truth, and gives us an account of the Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Creation of the World, and in the various dispensations of his Providence in the preservation and Government of it, and especially in the wonderful work of our Redemption. God is represented in the Scriptures, *as slow to anger and great in Power,*

Power, and who will not at all acquit the wicked, Nahum. i. 3. and we are required to love and serve him with all our Abilities both of Body and Mind, *Deut. vi. 5. Matt. xxii. 37.*

The Duties of men towards one another are no less strictly enjoined, than our duty towards God himself. For the Scriptures oblige all men to the conscientious performance of their several Duties, in their respective capacities and relations: They teach Wives and Children, and Subjects and Servants, Obedience, *not only for Wrath but also for Conscience sake;* and they teach Princes and Husbands, and Fathers and Masters, a proportionable care and kindness and affection; they check and restrain the rich and powerful from violence and oppression, and command them to relieve those that are in want, and to protect all that are in distress: and to root up the very seeds and principles of Vice in us; they regulate our desires, and give Laws to our words, and looks, and thoughts, they command an universal Love and Charity towards all Mankind, to hurt no body so much as in a Thought, but to do all the good which is in our power; they oblige men to do as they would be done unto in all cases, to consider others as men of the same nature with themselves, and to love and respect them accordingly upon all

occasions. I may add (what *Grotius* has not omitted) that more favour and equity is extended to one half of humane kind by the Christian Religion, than ever had been by any other: for among Infidels Women are esteemed but as slaves to the Lusts of men, who may have as many Wives as they please, and change them as often as they think fit.

II. The Scriptures propound to us the only true Principles of Holiness. For they teach us to perform all Duties both towards God and Man, upon Principles of Love and Charity, which are the only Principles that can make men happy in the performance of their respective duties, and that can cause them to persevere in it. What men do upon Principles of Love they do with delight, and what men delight in they will be sure to do; but fear hath torment, and men will use all Arts to get rid of their fears, and of that sense of Duty, which proceeds only from an apprehension of Punishments, and therefore is perpetually grievous and burthenfom to them: Rewards themselves may become ineffectual, by proposals of contrary Rewards, for smaller advantages, which are present and in hand, may be more prevalent, than never so much greater, which are future, and looked upon only at a distance. But a sense of Love and Gratitude and Charity can

can never fail of its effect, because this brings its reward with it, and makes our duty a delight. He who loves God will certainly obey him; and he that does not love him, never can truly obey him, as he ought, but will be ever repining at his Duty, and will be for seeking all pretences to excuse himself from it. He who doth not love his Neighbour, will be for taking all opportunities of pursuing his own advantage against him; but he who loves him as himself, will never do him any injury. *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law: For this thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law, Rom. xiii. 8.* The Love of God and of our Neighbour comprehends the whole duty of man, which is a Doctrine no where to be met withal, but in the Holy Scriptures, all the Wisdom of Philosophers could never discover this Doctrine, which sets before us the only infallible principles of obedience. And it must be a most gracious and wise Law, which makes Love the Principle and Foundation of our whole duty both towards God and Man.

III. The Christian Religion proposeth the most effectual motives of Obedience and Holiness of Life. The moral Reasons and Arguments for a vertuous Life are so great and evident, that those who live otherwise, are generally convinced that they ought not to do it : but because the Arguments from Reason are too faint and lifeless, to oppose to sense and passion ; therefore the Christian Religion is purposely fitted to every faculty, and presents us with greater objects of fear, and love, and desire, than any thing in the world can do. And as God will be served by us, upon no other *Principle* but that of love, for the chiefest *Motive* to our Obedience express'd throughout the Scriptures is the Divine Love. They represent to us all the methods which God has been pleased to use, as necessary to reclaim the world by his mercies and his judgments, by sending his Prophets *at sundry times and in divers manners*, and at last by sending his own Son. He saw the fondness that men have for this World, and for the pleasures and sins of it ; how subject they are to Temptations, and how prone to comply with them ; and therefore he has been pleased to pursue us with the endearments of his Love, and with such condescensions of Grace and Favour, as must needs mightily affect the most obstinate sinner, who

who has but the sense and gratitude of a man left in him to consider them : and then he has denounced his wrath and vengeance against all such, as will not be led and persuaded to their own happiness by the infinite love of Christ. He was born, he lived, he died for us ; he has procured our pardon, he proffers us his grace and assistance, he promises us eternal happiness with himself in heaven upon our obedience ; and last of all, he threatens us with eternal misery, if we will not be happy ; thus forcing us, as it were, to happiness, if we will not be persuaded to it : for this is all the force that free Agents are capable of. And if all that infinite Love could do to excite our Love, if all the rewards that infinite Mercy and Goodness could propose, and the severest punishments that Almighty Vengeance can inflict, will not prevail with men to follow Vertue, and refrain from Vice, nothing can possibly prevail with them. Love is most apt to produce Love, and hopes of Reward have a mighty effect upon men of any good temper and disposition ; but the fears of punishment are wont to work upon the very worst men : and where infinite loving kindness, eternal Rewards, and eternal Punishments, do all concur to bring men to the practice of Vertue, no motive can be wanting, by which human Nature

is capable of being wrought upon.

IV. The Christian Religion affords the greatest helps and assistances to an holy Life. God, who is a Spirit, and is the Author of the Being, and of the Life and Motion of all things, doth more especially act upon the Spirits and Minds of Men, by putting into them good desires, and by inclining their hearts to keep his commandments, and perform his will. And this Grace and Favour of God towards us, this spiritual aid and strength is sufficient to enable us to conquer sin, and overcome Temptations. And we are exhorted to *come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need,* Heb. iv. 16. which we are assured shall be bestowed upon us for Christ's sake, through his Merits, and by vertue of his Mediation and Intercession. All the world has been sensible of the great proneness in humane nature to evil, and backwardness to what Reason itself seems to dictate as good and fit to be done; but the Christian Religion only has provided a Remedy to cure this great corruption of our Nature, and assist us in the performance of our duty.

V. The Christian Religion expresseth the greatest compassion and condescension to our infirmities. Christ died to make satisfaction for our sins, and to procure

acceptance with God for us upon our repentance; he interceeds for us, and pleads the Merits of his own Death and Passion in our behalf, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins,* though they be never so great and heinous, if we do but truly repent of them and forsake them. And the sins of ignorance, and surprize, and infirmity, are not inconsistent with the terms of Salvation; but a general humiliation and repentance, with a constant and sincere endeavour to serve and please God, will, through Christ's Merits, be accepted of by him; for such sins as we have no sufficient means or ability of knowing to be sins, and for such as by reason of the frailty of our Nature, we cannot live wholly free from. Nothing is required of us, but a sincere and honest diligence to do what we can, and a lively Faith to rely upon Christ's Merits, for the pardon of what sins we are not able wholly to avoid.

Men are forward to complain of the uneasiness of the Christian Yoke without any true experience and trial of it, and without considering the Principles and Motives, and Helps, and the condescending and gracious Terms, which the Gospel proposes. Indeed, to lay some injunctions and restraints more than are absolutely necessary, is but what all Lawgivers have done.

some things are to be forbidden as a prevention and a preservative from the commission of sin, and others commanded as preparatory qualifications and dispositions to vertue, and to make the practice of it more easie and certain to us. And if men are allowed in all Governments to have this Authority, certainly God, who has an absolute Power over us, and perfectly knows what is necessary for our good, and for the ends of his Government, has an undeniable right to forbid or command us some things, which by the Law of nature we might have been allowed or excused from. But these are very few, and all things considered, no Religion ever was so compassionate and easie as the Christian Religion.

VI. The Propagation of the Gospel has ever had great effects towards the reformation and happiness of Mankind. What could be more beneficial to the world, and more for the peace and happiness of all Mankind, than to be taught to live under a perpetual sense and awe of the love and fear of God, and to be constrained to perform our several Duties to each other, in our respective capacities and relations, with the utmost fidelity and integrity; and to have this enforced upon the Consciences of Men by the hopes and terrors of a future Judgment, and an eternal state

state of happiness or misery, as they shall prove obedient, or disobedient? These then must be acknowledged to be Doctrines most worthy of God, and the proper subject of a Revelation. For however, men may wish as to themselves in particular, that they had not been abridged their sinful pleasures, yet in respect to the common good of Society, it must needs be confess'd by the most inveterate Enemies of Christianity, and by those who will believe nothing of another life, that if the Christian Religion were as generally practis'd, as it is profess'd, it would make mankind as happy as it is possible for men to be in this Life, through the belief and expectation of a Life to come. And as much as the Practice of the Christian Religion has been neglected, it is so far from being a speculative notion only, that it has a real and perpetual Influence for the good of the world, even in the worst and most degenerate Ages.

We are not at this distance of time easily made sensible how great Blessings the Christian Religion brought to mankind, in that Reformation which it soon introduced into the world. For upon their Conversion there became such a visible alteration in the Tempers and Lives of men, that they seem'd to have changed their very Natures, and to be born again, and become

Plin. Epist.
ad Trajan.
lib. 10. E-
pist. 97.
Lucian de
Morte Pe-
regrini.
Julian E-
pist. 44.

come new Creatures; from whence Conversion is stiled Regeneration. This the Apologists generally insist upon, that the Converts to Christianity became quite other men, and practised all kinds of Vertue with incredible zeal, though they had been never so vicious and profligate before. The Christians are represented as an innocent, devout, and charitable sort of men by *Pliny*, *Lucian*, and *Julian* the Apostate himself; by those who had most narrowly enquired into their Doctrines and Practices, and were worst affected to them. And by these means the Christians became as so many Lights in the world, to guide and direct others in the ways of Vertue: for by their example and doctrine they soon reformed even the Heathen world to a great degree. Morality was taught by the Philosophers in much greater perfection than ever it had been before; and they became so much ashamed of the grossness of their Idolatrous worship, that they sought out all arts to refine and excuse it. And those vices, which made up so great a part of their Idolatrous Mysteries appeared too abominable to pass any longer for Religion. The Oracles soon ceased, and the seducing Spirits confessed, that they were hindered from giving out their Answers by the Power of Christ, and all that *Julian* the Apostate could do, was ineffectual to
bring

bring the Heathen Oracles into reputation again. These are things before insisted upon, and so notorious in History, that they cannot be denied to be solely owing to the Power and Influence of the Christian Religion.

I shall mention but one instance more, and that is, the barbarous cruelty of the Heathen Religions, which the Gospel has delivered the world from. For they were wont to offer up innocent Men and Children in sacrifice to their false Gods, and that frequently, and in some places daily, and in times of great danger, and upon extraordinary occasions, they sacrificed so great numbers of men at once, that it would be incredible if we had not the Authority of the best Historians for the truth of it. And this custom of sacrificing men to their Gods, prevailed not only here in *Britain*, and in other Countrys, which were accounted barbarous, but all over *Greece*, and in *Rome* itself. It may well seem strange to us now, that such a practice should so generally prevail in the world, yet nothing is more certain from all History, than that it did prevail, and that men were with difficulty brought off from it. For when Mankind was thus cruelly tyrannized over by bloody Demons nothing but the omnipotent mercy of God could rescue them. And for this purpose the
Son

Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil, 1 John iii. 8 which he soon did, Beasts and Idols were no longer worshipped, and men were no longer made Sacrifices, when once Christianity began to appear in its full power and efficacy in the world. The plain and humble Doctrine of him that was laid in a Manger, and died upon a Cross, was in a short time more effectual to reform Mankind, than all the Precepts of Philosophers, and the Wisdom and Power of Lawgivers had ever been.

Those Enemies to their own Souls, who are so fond of little cavils against the Gospel, as if they were resolved not to be saved by it, yet owe the happiness of this present Life in great measure to its influence: they would not have been so safe in their Bodies and Estates, nay, perhaps they might have been sacrificed to some cruel Dæmon long before this, if that Religion which they resolve to despise, but will not be at the pains to understand, had not been believed by wiser and better men. Of so great advantage has the Gospel been to those, who will not be reclaimed and converted by it, it has destroyed the works of the Devil, and has dispossessed him of that Tyranny, which he held over mankind; it has made the unconverted world less vicious, and has banished

nished all the profets'd Patrons and Deities of wickedness from amongst men; it has made Idolatry less practised, and reduced it to narrower bounds, confining it to the remoter parts of the Earth: and every where upon the first approach of the Gospel; the evil Spirits are disarmed of their power, and flee away before it, as we learn from the History of *Lapland*, and other Countries. So general a Blessing is the Gospel of Christ, that even unbelievers are the better for it in this world, tho they exclude themselves from the benefit of it in the next. And the Christian is the only Religion against which the common objection concerning the prejudices of Education in favour of it cannot be urged: for as it first prevailed in the world by conquering all the prejudices of Education, so it still maintains itself against all the opposition that corrupt nature and a vicious Education can make to it.

Indeed it may seem a needless thing to have been thus large in the proof of the excellency of the practical Doctrine contained in the Scriptures; when God knows this is the greatest exception, that most men have against them; and if the precepts were not so strict and holy, but they might be allowed to live in their sins, half the evidence we have for the Authority of the Scriptures would satisfy them.

VII. The highest Mysteries of the Christian Religion are not merely speculative, but have a necessary relation to practice for the advancement of Piety and Vertue amongst men. As there is nothing in the practical Duties taught and enjoined by the Scriptures, but what is most excellent and worthy of God, and which has raised and improved the Nature of man beyond what could have been attained to without it : so the speculative Doctrines have as evident Characters of the Wisdom and Goodness of God. They all tend to the advancement of our Nature to make us better, more wise and more happy ; and are not designed to gratify a vain and useless curiosity, but to excite in us the Love of God, and a care and concernment for our own happiness. They set before us the Original and Creation of all things, the innocence in which man was first created, and God's love and compassion to him after his Fall, how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are concerned in our Redemption, that the Father sent his Son, that the Son was born, that he lived a despised and persecuted Life, and at last underwent for us a most shameful and grievous death ; that he rose again and ascended into Heaven, and there continually interceeds for us, and that he sent the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who sup-
ports

ports and assists us under all temptations and dangers in our way thither, and will, if we be not wanting to our selves, safely conduct us to Heaven, there to reign with Christ in Eternal Bliss and Glory both of Body and Soul, but if we will be disobedient and obstinate to our own ruine, we must be eternally tormented with the Devil and his Angels.

The Apostles, who without Learning or Philosophy, taught the most sublime and useful Truths more plainly than the wisest Philosophers ever had done, must derive their knowledge from a higher Principle than they did. It is impossible for the wit of man to contrive any thing so admirably fitted to procure the happiness of Mankind, as their Doctrines are ; no precepts can be more righteous and holy, no rewards more excellent, nor punishments more formidable, than those of the Gospel ; and which is above all, no Religion besides ever afforded, nor could all the reason of Mankind ever have found out, such powerful Motives to the Love of God, which is the only true principle of Obedience. Our Religion contains no dry and empty speculations, but all its Mysteries are Mysteries of Love and Mercy : Others may fear God, but it is the Christian only that can truly love him, and trust in him, and in all conditions, in Life and in
Death

death look up to him, as his Father, his Saviour, and Comforter. This Religion places men in the presence of God, and entitles them to his peculiar favour and care; it declares God to be their Friend and protector here, and their everlasting Rewarder after Death; it promises and assures us of all the happiness both in Body and Soul, that we are capable of: which is the utmost that can be expected, or wished for from any Revelation, and the proper and peculiar reason, why God should establish Religion in the World.

It appears from this whole discourse, that nothing is wanting in the Books of the Old and New Testament, which can be expected in any Revelation. They are of the greatest Antiquity; and have been preached throughout the World; and have abundant evidence both by Prophecies and Miracles, of their Divine Authority, and the Doctrine contained in them is such, as God must be supposed to reveal to Mankind, having visible Characters in it of the Divine Goodness and Holiness, and having exceedingly conduced to the reformation of the world.

THE

T H E

Reasonableness and Certainty

O F T H E

Christian Religion.

P A R T I I I .

That there is no other Divine Revelation, but that contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

THAT there is no other institution of Religion besides that delivered in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which has all things necessary to a Divine Revelation, may be shewn in the several Particulars necessary to a Divine Revelation,

C c on,

on, as that no other Religion ever was of like Antiquity, or had equal Promulgation; that no other ever had sufficient evidence of Miracles and Prophecies in proof of it; and lastly, that there never was any other, which did not teach many Doctrines that are unworthy of God, and contrary to the Divine Attributes, and therefore impossible to come from Heaven. This I shall prove first of the Religions of the Heathens; secondly of the *Mahometan* Religion.

C H A P. I.

The Novelty of the Heathen Religions.

THe Novelty of the Religions amongst the Heathens (whom we have any certain account of from their Writings) in respect of the Scriptures is so notorious, having been so often proved by learned men, and is so generally acknowledged, that it is needless to insist much upon it. The Heathens generally were strangers to every thing of Antiquity, and therefore must be unable to give any proof of the Antiquity of their Religions.

The

The pretences which the *Egyptians* made to Antiquity, so much beyond the times recorded in the Scriptures, proceeded from their reckoning by Lunar years, or (a) months: but they had so different accounts however of Chronology, that, as *Diodorus Siculus* says, some of them computed thirteen thousand years more than others, from the Original of their Dynasties to the time of *Alexander the Great*. And the Solar year, in use among the *Egyptians*, who were most famous for Astronomy, was so imperfect, that they said the Sun had several times changed (b) his Course since the beginning of their Dynasties, imputing the defect of their own computation for want of intercalary days, to the Sun's variation; or else affecting to speak something wonderful and extravagant. The earliest Astronomical observations to be met with, which were made in *Egypt*, are those performed by the *Greeks* of *Alexandria* less than CCC years before Christ, as (c) Mr. *Halley* has observed, (d) The *Chaldeans* supposed the Moon to be a luminous Body, and therefore could have no great skill in Astronomy; besides, they wanted Instruments to make exact observations. 'All we have of them, says the same learned (e) Astronomer, 'is only 'seven Eclipses of the Moon, and even those 'but very cursorily set down, and the old-

(a) Diodor Sic. lib. 1. Plinarch. in Numa. Var. apud Lactantius Orig. Error. lib. ii. c. 12.

(b) Herod. Euterpe.

(c) Mr. Halley's Reflections upon ancient Learning, c. 23.

(d) Vitruv. lib. ix. c. 4.

(e) In Mr. Watson's Reflections, lib. ii.

est not much above DCC. years before
 Christ; so that after all the fame of these
Chaldeans, we may be sure, they had not
 gone far in this Science: and though *al-*
listhenes be said by *Porphyry* to have
 brought from *Babylon* to *Greece* observa-
 tions above MDC. CC. years older than
Alexander; yet the proper Authors mak-
 ing no mention or use of any such, ren-
 ders it justly suspected for a Fable. So
 little ground is there for us to depend upon
 the Accounts of Time, and the vain boasts
 of Antiquity which these Nations have
 made. He farther observes, that the
Greeks were the first Practical Astrono-
 mers, who endeavoured in earnest to
 make themselves Masters of the Science;
 and that *Thales* was the first who could
 predict an Eclipse in *Greece*, not DC.
 years before Christ; and that *Hipparchus*
 made the first Catalogue of the fixt Stars
 not above CL. years before Christ.

(d) *Centu-*
ria de Die
Natali,
 c. 21.

According to that known observation
 (f) of *Varro*, there was nothing that can
 deserve the name of History to be found
 among the *Greeks* before the *Olympiads*,
 which were but about twenty years be-
 fore the building of *Rome*. And whatever
 Learning or Knowledge of ancient times
 the *Romans* had, they borrowed it from
 the *Greeks*. For they were so little capa-
 ble of transmitting their own affairs down

to

to Posterity, with any exactness in point
 of time, that for (g) some Ages they had (g) *Id. c. 23*
 neither Dials nor Hour-glasses to measure
 their days and nights by for common use,
 and for three hundred years they knew no
 such things as hours or the like distincti-
 ons; but computed their time only from
 Noon to Noon; so that it is no wonder,
 that their Calendar was in such confusion
 till *Cæsar* regulated it.

The pretensions of the *Chineses* to Anti-
 quity appear equally vain, and upon the
 same grounds: For they understood little
 or nothing of Astronomy, or else the Mis-
 sionaries by their Skill in that Art would not
 have been able so much to insinuate them-
 selves with the Emperors of *China*. Indeed
 the *Chineses* themselves (h) confess that (h) *Martin*
 their Antiquities are in great part fabulous, *ult. Sin.*
 and they acknowledge that their most an- *lib. i. ii.*
 cient Books were in Hieroglyphicks, which *& Act. si-*
 are not expounded by any who lived near- *nis. Pract*
 er than MDC. years to the first Author of *Phillip.*
 them, that the numbers in computation *Couper.*
 are sometimes mistaken, or that Months *Comte.*
 are put for Years. But of what Antiquity *Proc. n.*
 or Authority soever their first Writers *Declar. 8*
 were, there is little or no credit to be gi- *Prat. ad*
 ven to the Books now remaining since that *Fab. Circ*
 general destruction of all ancient Books by *rol. Sinic.*
 the Emperor *Xi Hoan ti*, who lived but *Monarchi*
 about two hundred years before Christ. *Le Compt*
Revenus
p. 64. 71
451.

C c 2

be

he commanded upon pain of death all the Monuments of Antiquity to be destroyed, relating either to History or Philosophy, especially the Books of *Confucius*, and killed many of their Learned men: so that from his time, they have only some fragments of old Authors left. The *Chinese* are a people vain enough, and love to magnify themselves to the *Europeans*, which makes them endeavour to have it believed, that their Antiquities are sufficiently entire, notwithstanding this destruction of their Books: and for the same reason they described the Emperor's Observatory as the most compleat, and the best fitted for the uses of Astronomy, that could be imagined; but upon the view it appeared very inconsiderable, and the instruments were found useles, and new ones were placed in their room, made by the direction of Father *Verbiest*. This people after all their boasts of skill in Astronomy, were not able to make an exact Calendar, and their Table of Eclipses were so uncorrect, that they could scarce foretel about what time that of the Sun should happen. And in a Petition, which the Emperor of *China*, in favour, it seems, to the Missionaries, had privately drawn up to be presented by them to himself in publick; it is said, that *Father Adam Schaal* made it known to all the Court, that the Rules
of

of the Cœlestial Motions established by the ancient Astronomers of China were all false. And not only the common people of *China*, but the chief *Mandarines* are so ignorant and superstitious, that when they see the Sun or Moon under an Eclipse, with Sacrifices and other Rites, and with great noise and clamor they apply themselves to rescue them from the Dog or Dragon, which they imagine is like to devour them.

So little credit is to be given to the pretences, which the several Nations among the Heathens have made to Antiquity, without any ground from History, but upon wandring discourses of observations in Astronomy, which they had little or no skill in. And it has been made evident by divers learned men, that the most ancient, and the very best of the Heathen Gods were but Men, whom the Scriptures mention as worshippers of the True God, such as *Noah, Joseph, Moses, &c.*

C H A P. II.

Of the Defect in the Promulgation of the Heathen Religions.

(a) Valer. Max. de Peregrina Relig. rest. lib. ii. c. 3.

THE Propagation of the several Religions profest among the Heathens has been very inconsiderable. For they were never extant in Books to be publicly read and examined, but their Mysteries were kept secret and concealed from the world; and all the knowledge the people had of them was from their Priests. Every Country had its peculiar Deities and ways of Worship, which were seldom received or known, but in those places where they were first set up. The (a) *Romans* rejected many foreign Religions as abominable; and none of their Religions ever prevailed, but where they had the temporal Power to uphold them. And they lost ground daily by the propagation of the Gospel, whilst the greatest part of the Empire made it their business to oppress it, and to maintain the Heathen Religions against it.

It is to be observed, that the Christian Religion is at this day preached in all parts of the Heathen world, and has been ever since its first propagation, as the Jewish Religion

Religion was before: but where Christianity has prevailed, Heathenism has been never able to maintain its ground; and there are hardly any but Christians (excepting some few Jews) to be found in Christian Countries: which makes a great abatement in the disproportion, that Heathenism in general may seem to have in its numbers above Christianity. But if we examine the particularly Religions of the Heathens, there is no comparison; and the only thing here to be enquired into is, whether any particular Religion of the Heathens exceed or equal the Christian Religion in point of Promulgation: for who ever can imagine, that all, or any great number of the Heathen Religions are of Divine Revelation, must suppose God to reveal contradictions. The Question before us, is not whether Heathens are more numerous than Christians, but whether any of their Religions has been as fully promulged as the Christian: One Herald is enough to promulge a Law to many thousands; the City of *Nineve* was converted by one Prophet, and there is, perhaps, no Nation in the world but has more Christians in it, than the first preachers of the Gospel were.

C H A P. III.

The Defect of the Prophecies and Miracles of the Heathen Religions.

It cannot be denied by any man, who is not resolved to reject the Authority of all History, but that many wonders have been done by Magicians, and that many things have been foreshewn and foretold among Heathens by Dreams and Prodigies, and Oracles, which did actually come to pass: but then all that can be gathered from hence is, that there are invisible Powers, and that Devils and wicked Spirits are able to do more than men can do, and to know more than men can know: for which reason in former Ages there was no more doubt made, whether there be Spirits, than whether there be men in the world: for they were continually sensible of the Operations and Effects of invisible Beings, which made them exceedingly prone to Idolatry, but not inclined to Atheism. And the case is the same now in Heathen Countries, where Apparitions and Delusions of evil Spirits, are affirmed by all Writers to be very frequent.

But if at any time evil Spirits, by their subtilty and experience, and knowledge
of

of affairs in the World, did foretel things which accordingly came to pass, they were things that happened not long after, and commonly such as themselves did excite and prompt Men to: Thus when the conspiracy against *Cesar* was come just to be put in execution, and the Devil had his Agents concerned in it, he could foretel the time and place of his Death. But it had been foretold to *Pompey*, *Crassus*, and *Cesar* himself before, as (a) *Tully* informs us from his own knowledge, that they should all die in their Beds, and in an honorable old Age. Some Oracles might possibly take their Answers from the Scriptures, as that of *Jupiter Hammon* concerning *Alexander's* Victories, if it were not merely a piece of flattery, which proved true by chance. Evil Spirits might likewise be able to inform Men, at a great distance, of Victories, the same day they were won, as it is related (b) of several, and in particular of the Conquest of *Perseus* King of *Macedon*, by *Paulus Æmilius*, when *P. Vatiens*, to whom this was discovered the same day, was imprisoned, till the News of the Victory was confirmed, and then he was rewarded with an Estate, settled upon him by the Senate. But they could not foretel things that depended upon the choice of free Agents, and which were not to be fulfilled till many

(a) *Tull.*
de Divin.
lib. ii.

(b) *ib.*

many hundred years after the prediction; this is peculiar to God himself, who would never suffer the World to be imposed upon by Oracles of this nature, if it had been possible for the Devil to give them out. And though their predictions of future events did sometimes prove true, yet they very often failed, for which no reason can be given, but the want of Knowledge or Power in the evil Spirits and the over-ruling Providence of God to disappoint and discover the Delusions. *He frustrateth the Tokens of the Liars, and maketh Diviners mad; he turneth Wisemen backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish,* *Isai. xlv. 25.* (c) Their Gods would sometimes confess, that they foretold Events by the Stars; that they were unable to resist the Decrees of Fate; that the Temperature of the Air was the cause why they could not always make true Predictions, and therefore they would often forewarn, that what they answered was not to be credited, and that what they declared was by force and constraint. *Force me to speak no more, says Apollo, for I shall tell you Lies.* And their most famous Oracles were glad to conceal their meaning in so ambiguous Terms, that they wanted another Oracle to explain them, for by this means they endeavoured to avoid the being discovered to be false.

Yet

Yet this Device would not keep up their Reputation, but most of the Sects of Philosophers had little or no regard for them; and (d) *OEnomaus*, a Cynick Philosopher, finding himself deceived by the Oracle of *Apollo*, wrote a particular Treatise to discover the Imposture of Oracles. *Demo.* 20. *Athenes* observed that the *Delphian* Oracle was bribed by *Philip of Macedon*; and divers instances, of (e) the corruption and subornation of Oracles, are to be found in *Herodotus*, *Plutarch*, and other Authors. In *Tully's* time, nothing grew more contemptible than the Oracles; for, as Men became wiser, they were less regarded, and began to cease, till by the power of the Gospel they were quite silenced; which put the (f) Heathen upon great Enquiries, to find out what reason could be given why they should fail. The cessation of Oracles was not all at once, but by degrees, as the cessation likewise of true Prophecies and Miracles was, which were to oppose and abolish them. Their false and ambiguous Answers had brought them into contempt before, as we learn from *Tully de Divin. lib. ii.* in many places; and upon the Revelation of the Gospel their Power was still less, and they every day became more despicable; and then they were upheld chiefly by human Artifice and Imposture, till they were wholly subdued and decayed.

The

(c) Euseb. Præpar. lib. vi. c. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

(d) Cited by Euseb. de Præpar. lib. v. c. 19.

20.

(e) Vid. Van Dale de Oraculis Ethnicorum.

(f) Cic. de Divin. Plut. de defect. Oraculorum.

The Devil could not always foretel what was to come to pass, and therefore his Agents had need of their Vaults and hollow Statues, and other Artifices, to conceal their ignorance, and help them out, when their Arts of Conjurat[i]on failed. But we have no reason to think that the Devil, who is so industrious to promote his evil ends, by all possible means, would omit such an opportunity as was given him by the opinion which the Heathen had of their Oracles. And the Trials which *Cræsus* and *Trajan* made, are sufficient to prove that there was something Supernatural and Diabolical in them. (g) *Cræsus* sent to have many Oracles consulted at a set time, and the Question to be put to them was, what *Cræsus* himself at that time was doing; and he resolved to be employed about the most improbable thing that could be imagined: for he was boiling a Tortoise and a Lamb together in a brass Pot, and yet the Oracle of *Delphi* discovered to the Messengers what the King was then about (h). *Trajan*, when he was going into *Parthia*, sent a blank Paper, sealed up, to an Oracle of *Assyria* for an Answer; the Oracle returned him another blank Paper, to shew that it was not so to be imposed upon. And there is no doubt to be made, but that the Emperor would contrive his Seal as skilfully

(g) Hero-
dot.lib.i.c.
47.

(h) Ma-
crob. Sa-
turn.lib.i.
c. 23.

as

as *Lucian* could do, who says, That he had sometimes sealed his Notes, which he sent so carefully, that all the ways and tricks, which he mentions in his *Pseudomantis*, could not open them without discovery, when they were to be again returned to him, with the Answer to his Questions. But tho' things of present concernment were discovered, both to *Cræsus* and *Trajan*, beyond all human Power to know, yet both were imposed upon by ambiguous Answers, when they consulted about things future, which the Devil could not attain the knowledge of.

(i) Many of the Heathen Priests themselves, upon examination, publicly confessed several of their Oracles to be Impostures, and discovered the whole contrivance and management of the Deceit, which was entred upon Record. And in the rest, the Power of the Devil was always so limited and restrained, as to afford sufficient means to undeceive Men, though many of his Predictions might come to pass.

(k) The presence of Christians at the Heathen Sacrifices, when they signed themselves with the sign of the Cross in token of their Christianity, though this were unknown to the Priests that sacrificed, would hinder the Dæmons from making those discoveries of the Events, by the entrails

(i) Euseb.
Præpar.lib
iv.c.2.

(k) La-
stant. de
vera Relig.
c. 27. de
mort. Per-
secut.c. 10.

(1) Euseb.
Dem. lib.
iii. c. 6.
Aug. de
civit. Dei
lib. xix. 23.

(m) Phi-
lostorg.
lib. vii.
c. 12.

entrails of the Beasts, which they were wont to do. And as the Devil was forced to declare our Saviour to be the Son of God, by the Mouths of those whom he had possessed, so he was constrained to confess and commend him by his most noted Oracles, as one of the greatest enemies of the Gospel (*l*) *Porphyry* himself has informed us. And when *Julian* the Apostate hoped to bring Oracles into request again, *Apollo* told him, (as I have mentioned before) That he could return no Answer to any thing which was asked him, till the Bones of the Martyr *Babylas* were removed; and when that was done, God was pleased to suffer the Oracle of *Daphne*, and others, to give out their Answers, but so notoriously false, that they exposed them as much as their silence had done before; for when all the Oracles were consulted, to know (m) whether *Julian*, Uncle to the apostate, should recover of his sickness, and they all agreed that he would recover, he died while the Answers were reading that foretold his Recovery.

For the sins of Men against natural Conscience, and the contempt of the Divine Revelations made to Mankind, and so often promulged amongst all Nations, God might permit the Devil to delude the World with such Signs and Predictions, as
either

either were indeed true, or could not be discerned to be false, but by the Doctrines and Practices which they were brought to countenance and establish. There is no doubt but that evil Spirits may be able to delude and impose upon men, and to do many things by their sagacity and cunning, which may be above the power of man not only to perform, but to understand or find out: but their Miracles were never wrought to confirm any sound and useful Doctrine, nor had they been plainly foretold by ancient Prophecies, as the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles had been. And the power by which our Religion was attested and established, was so much superiour to any power in the Heathen Gods, that when they were adjured by Christians, they were forced to confess themselves to be wicked and seducing Spirits, as the Primitive Christians declare in their writings, and appeal to the Heathens of their own times for the truth of it, and undertake upon pain of death to prove it before them. This *Tertullian* undertakes in (n) (n) *Tertullian* his Apology, (as I have before observed) written to the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, or at least to the proconsul of *Africk*, and the Governours of the several Cities and Provinces. And *St. Cyprian* affirms the like, in his Treatise to *Demetrianus* a Judge of *Carthage*, or as some think, the

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Pro:

Pro-conful : to the same purpose likewise speak *Origen*, *Minutius Felix*, and others of the Primitive Christians. And we cannot imagine that men of common sense would ever have made such publick and repeated Appeals, if their pretences had been false, to the hazard of their own lives, and the utter disgrace and extirpation, of their Religion, which they endeavoured to plead for by such confident and bold discourses, so easie to be disproved, if they had not been true Men, who have the wealth and power of the world on their side may perhaps sometimes make large boasts and high pretences, when they can easily hinder others from bringing them to the Test but men that had all the power and policy of the Empire against them, would never have offered any thing of this Nature in defence of their Religion, unless they had been able to make it good to the faces of their worst Enemies, to whom their Apologies were directed.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

The Defect in point of Doctrine in the Heathen Religions.

IT is undeniable that the Doctrines of all the Heathen Religions have been wicked and contrary to the Unity, and Goodness, and Purity of God, and to the vertue and happiness of Mankind. This might be made out at large by particulars, as

I. The Theology of the Heathens was so confused and absurd, that the only Evasion which the Philosophers could find, who undertook the defence of Paganism against Christianity, was to expound their Theology by Allegories; but this *Philo* (a) Euseb. præpar. lib. 1. c. 9. 10. *Biblius* censures as absurd, and maintains that it was a mere abuse and innovation in their Divinity, in proof of which he alledges the authority of *Sanckoniathon* and *Eusebius*, besides he makes good the charge (b) Magnam multitudinem suscepit & necessariam per Zenon, post Cleanthes, deinde Chrysippus commentum suum bularum reddere rationem. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. *Zeno* first begun this way of Allegorizing, in which he was followed by *Cleanthes*, *Chrysippus*, and other Stoicks (c) Tertul. ad Nic. lib. ii. c. 1. Aug. C. 7. De lib. 6. c. 5. *Varro* makes Three sorts of Heathen Theology; the Fabulous,

invented by the Poets: The Physical, or that of the Philosophers; and the Civil or Popular, being such as the several Cities and Countries had set up (d). The Greek Theology was thus distinguished. 1. God, who rules over all. 2. The Gods, who were supposed to govern above the Moon. 3. The Demons, whose jurisdiction was in the Air below it: and 4. The Heroes or Souls of dead men, who were imagined to preside over Terrestrial affairs; which gives some account of the prodigious multitude of their Gods, (e) whereof *Hesiod* computes thirty thousand hovering in the Air (unless he be to be understood of an indefinite number.) *Orpheus* reckoned but 305 (f) and at his death in his Will asserted only one: g) *Varro* reckoned up three hundred *Jupiters*, and the Gods of *Mexico* (as the *Indians* reported to the *Spaniards*) were two thousand in number. *Varro*, *Tully*, and *Seneca*, and most sober and discreet men were ashamed of the Heathen Gods, and believed, that there is but one God, to which purpose the verses of *Valerius Soranus* (h) are produced and expounded by *Varro*.

The worship of their Gods and of their Images or Idols, was so gross amongst the ancient Heathens, and is to this day in *China* and in both the *Indies*, that one would almost think it impossible for men to be so far

(d) Euseb. præpar. lib. 4. c. 5.

(e) Hesiod. oper. & Dies. lib. 1. v. 250.

(f) Theop. ad Autol. lib. 3.

(g) Tertul. Apol. c. 14. Gages survivor of the W. Indies, c. 12.

(h) Aug. de civ. D. i. lib. iv. c. 31. vii. 9.

far deluded by the Devil: they worshiped, not only the Ghosts of dead men, but Birds and Beasts, and creeping things, and the Devil himself under Images of such hideous forms and shapes, as are frightful to look upon. The wiser Heathens were ashamed of these Idolatries (i) and *Varro* particularly commends the Jews for using no Images in their Divine Worship, which he says, were not in use at *Rome* till above one hundred and seventy years after the Foundation of the City; (k) for *Numa*, the contriver of their Religion, forbade Images: which makes it the more strange, that the (l) *Romans* should afterwards erect Temples and Altars to the most unlikely things, to a *Fever*, and to *ill Fortune*, as the (m) *Athenians* did to *contumely* and *Impudence*: but it is still more amazing, that they should deify the worst of men, the very Monsters and reproaches of Mankind: and whilst the Christians suffered for refusing Adoration to their Emperors, they had divine Honours paid them by the gravest Heathens, such as (n) *Quintilian*, not only through fear of death, but out of compliment and base flattery.

2. All manner of Debauchery and Lewdness made up so great a part of the Heathen Religion, that it is too shameful and too notorious to relate. (n) The *Romans*, when they received the Gods of other

(i) Aug. Civ. Dei lib. iv. c. 31.

(k) Plut. in vit. Numa.

(l) Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. de legib. lib. ii.

(m) Quint. Institut. lib. xiv. Proem.

(n) Euseb. præpar. lib. vi. c. ult. ex Dionys. Ha. Æarn. lib.

Nations, did not worship them after their manner, and yet the Rites of the Romans themselves in the worship of Cybele, Flora, Bacchus, &c. were very scandalous and wicked. And all their sports and spectacles (which had nothing surely in them, that could be proper for Divine Worship) were invented and performed in honour of their Gods, (p) whence *Justin Martyr* says, the Theatre might be stiled a kind of Temple.

2. But besides their bloody Spectacles, where men were exposed to be killed by Beasts, or by one another, their Altars themselves were not free from humane Blood. For the barbarous cruelty of the Religion amongst the Heathens was such, that they were obliged to offer up innocent Men and Children in Sa-

crifice to their Deities. Some of the *Rabbins* have been of opinion that *Japheth* sacrificed his Daughter, but others deny it (q), and all are agreed, that if he did sacrifice her, he sinned in doing it: and we know, that *Abraham* was hindered by a Miracle and a voice from Heaven, when he was about to slay *Isaac*. But it was a custom among

Of this custom the *Hebrews* were ignorant, and it is not mentioned in the *Scriptures*. But it is a custom which is still practised in many parts of the world, and is a very barbarous and cruel one.

(p) See the (q) *Phoenicians* and *Carthaginians* for their Kings in times of great calamity to sacrifice

vice one of their Sons, whom they loved best, and it was common both with them and the *Moabites* and *Ammonites* to sacrifice their Children. The *Egyptians*, the *Athenians*, and *Lacedaemonians*, and generally all the *Cracians*; the *Romans* and *Carthaginians*, the *Germans*, and *Gauls*, and *Britains*, and in brief all the Heathen Nations throughout the world, offered up men upon their Altars, and this not on certain emergencies, and in imminent dangers, but constantly, and in some places every day; but upon extraordinary Accidents multitudes were sacrificed at once to their Bloody Deities, (r) as *Diodorus Siculus* and others relate, that in *Africa* two hundred Children of the principal Nobility were sacrificed to *Saturn* at one time. And (s) *Arifonnes* sacrificed three hundred men together to *Jupiter Ithomyes*, one of whom was *Abropomp's* King of the *Lacedaemonians*. And the same custom is found practised amongst the idolatrous *Indians* of offering whole Hecatombs of humane Sacrifices to their false Gods. (t) In *Peru*, when their new *Inca* was crowned they sacrificed two hundred Children, from four to ten years of age: And the Son was wont to be sacrificed for the Life of the Father, when he was in danger of death. Sometimes the *Mexicans* have sacrificed above five thousand of their cap-

(p) *Diodorus Siculus* apud *Eusebium de Libris Constant.*
(q) *Justin Martyr* de *Interrogationibus* c. 1. c. 7.
(r) *Arifonnes* apud *Alexand. de Cultu* lib. 5. c. 9, 21.

tives in a day, and in divers places above twenty thousand, as *Acosta* writes out of the informations he had from the *Indians*.

(u) Liv. lib. xxii. c. 57.
(w) Plutarch. in Marcello, initio.

(x) Laet. lib. i. c. 21.

(u). *Livy* makes mention of Humane Sacrifices at *Rome*, and (w) *Plutarch* says, they continued in his time, and it was not till about the time of *Constantine's* Reign, that a final stop was put to so strange and Abominable a Practice; for tho' it abated very much under *Adrian*, yet it was used, when *Minutius Felix* wrote, and (x) *Lactantius* mentions it, as not laid aside in his time. Notwithstanding it is so much against humane Nature, as well as contrary to the Divine Mercy and Goodness, yet it made up so great a part of the Heathen Religion, and was become so customary, that it was hard to bring men off from it; which at the same time demonstrates both how false such Religions were, and that men had a most undoubted experience of invisible Powers, or else in so many Nations both the Kings and People would never have sacrificed their own Children to their false Gods, to avert the evils which they were threatened withal.

The Persons that introduced the Heathen Religions, were either Men of Design, who established themselves in their Power and Authority by it, as *Numa*, or Men of Fancy and Fiction, as the Poets, whom *Plato* would have banished out of his

his Commonwealth. And the Gods of the Heathens, who must be supposed to reveal these Mysteries and Ways of Worship, were always more wicked than their Votaries, whose greatest Immoralities consisted in the Worship of them; the gross Enormities not only of *Venus* and *Bacchus*, but of *Saturn* and *Jupiter*, are too well known to need any particular relation.

There was no Body of Laws, or Rules of good Life, proposed by their Oracles; but on the contrary, they were in commendation of lascivious Poets, or they flattered Tyrants, or they appointed Divine Worship to be paid to such as won the Mastery at the *Olympick* Games, or to Inanimate things; or they promoted some other ill, or vain and unprofitable design, as *OEnomaus* the Philosopher observed, and proved by particular instances recited out of him by (y) *Eusebius*. The Laws of (z) *Lycurgus* were approved of, and confirmed by the *Delphick* Oracle, and yet Theft, and a Community of Wives, and the Murder of Infants, was allowed by these Laws.

(y) Euseb. Præpar. lib. v. c. 34. 35.
(z) Plutarch. in Lycurg.

This is enough to shew, that the Heathen Religions could not be from God, since they taught the Worship of Idols and of Devils; and the Mysteries and Rites of them were utterly inconsistent with the Goodness

Goodness and Purity of Almighty God. And whoever doth but look into the Religions at this day amongst the Idolatrous *Indians*, by their ridiculous and cruel Penances, and other Superstitions, (besides the sacrificing of Men, and sometimes of themselves, as the Women, who offer themselves to be burnt with the Bodies of their dead Husbands, and the like) will soon be convinced that they cannot be of God's institution. The *Chineses* themselves, who have so great a Reputation for Wisdom, are like the rest, both in their Idolatries, and in many of their Opinions and Practices.

It is evident therefore, that none of the Heathen Religions can make any probable claim to Divine Revelation, having none of the Requisites to such a Revelation, but being but of a late Original, not far divulged, supported neither by Prophecies nor Miracles from God, and containing Doctrines that are Idolatrous, impure, Cruel, and every way wicked and absurd.

C H A P. V.

Of the Philosophy of the Heathens.

BUT besides the Religions of the Heathens, divers of the Philosophers pretended to something Supernatural, as *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, and some others, and therefore it will be proper here to examine likewise the Justice of their Pretensions. And indeed, whatever the Original of the Heathen Philosophy were, whether from their Gods, or from themselves, if the Precepts of Philosophy amongst the Heathens were a sufficient Rule of good Life, there may seem to have been little or no necessity for a Divine Revelation. But I shall prove, 1. That the Heathen Philosophy was very defective and erroneous. 2. That whatever was excellent in it, was owing to the Revelations contained in the Scriptures. 3. That if it had been as excellent, and as certain, as it can be pretended to be, yet there had been great need of a Divine Revelation.

1. The Heathen Philosophy was very defective and erroneous. It was *defective* in point of Authority. *Socrates*, though he would be thought to be inspired, or supernaturally assisted, gave Men only his own word for it. *Pythagoras* indeed, pre-

(a) Xenoph.
Epist. ad
Æschinam.
Plutarch.
in Numâ.

pretended both to Prophecies and Miracles, but he was a great Magician, in the opinion both of (a) *Xenophon* and *Plutarch*, and therefore whatever he did or foretold, must be ascribed to that Power, which, as it has been before declared, the Devils may have, to do strange things, and to know things done at a distance, or some time after; and his Predictions and Miracles, (even as they are related by *Jamblichus*) were such, as that a bare recital of them were enough to confute any Authority, which could be claimed by them. His Impostures may be seen in *Diogenes Laertius*. And (b) *Aristotle* says, *Epimenides* foretold nothing, whatever others relate of him. And as the Philosophers had no *Divine* Authority for what they delivered, so their *own* was but of small account; they were generally rather Men of Wit and Humour, than of sound Doctrine or good Morals. And whoever reads the Lives of the Philosophers written by *Diogenes Laertius*, and the Lives of the *Cæsars* by *Suetonius*, would believe the World might have been as soon reformed by the one as the other. As to the Philosophers, who, after the Christian Religion appeared in the World, pretended to Miracles, it is a hard matter to think the Writers of their Lives in earnest, when they relate them: For a Man may

(b) Arist.
Rhet. l. iii.
c. 17.

as well believe the Fables of *Æsop* or *Lucian* to be true History, as the Stories in the Life of *Apollonius Tyranæus* written by *Philostratus*, or those in the Life of *Isidorus* written by *Damascius*, an abstract whereof we have left preserved (c) in *Photius*.
(c) Phot. Cod. ccxlii.

The Heathen Philosophy was defective likewise in point of Antiquity and Promulgation. Philosophy, as far as we have any account of it, was but a late thing; so it is styled in *Tully* (d), *neque ante Philosophiam patefactam, quæ nuper inventa est*.
(d) Tull. de Divin. lib. i.
(e) *Seneca* computes the time of it to be less than a thousand years before his own time; but the moral and useful part of Philosophy, had no ancienter Original than *Socrates*. And Philosophy of all kinds, has always been a matter of Learning, and confined to learned Men: There never was any one Nation of *Pythagoreans*, or *Platonists*, or *Stoicks*, or *Aristotelians*; the greatest part of the Nations of the World, never heard so much as of the Names of the most celebrated Philosophers, and know nothing at all of their Doctrine.
(e) Apud Lactant. de fals. sapient. c. 16.

That Philosophy was defective in its Doctrines is notorious: For, as *Lactantius* observes, the very Name of Philosophy (invented by *Pythagoras*, who yet would be thought to have had some supernatural assistance)

assistance) implies a confession of Ignorance, or imperfection of their Knowledge, and a profession only to search after Wisdom. And (f) *Pythagoras* gave this very reason why he styled himself a Philosopher, because no Man can be Wise but God only, and yet this vain Man sometimes pretended himself to be a God. *Socrates* was the first of all the Philosophers that applied himself to the study of Morality; and (*) he, who first undertook to render Philosophy useful and beneficial to Mankind, professed to know nothing at all certainly, but to disprove the Errors of others, not to establish or discover Truth: In which he was followed by *Plato*; and before him, *Democritus*, *Anaxagoras*, *Empedocles*, and almost all the ancient Philosophers, agreed in this, though they agreed in few things else, that they could attain to no certain knowledge of things. So that, as *Tully* says, *Arcefilas* was not the Founder of a new Academy, or Sect of Philosophers, who professed to doubt of all things, for he taught no more than what the ancient Philosophers had generally taught before him, unless it were that *Socrates* profess'd to know his own ignorance of things, but *Arcefilas* would not own himself certain of so much as that. Indeed the notions of Philosophy were so little convincing, even in the plainest matters, that many of the greatest

(f) Diog. Laert. in Pythag. Jamblich. vit. Pythag.

(*) Tull. Acad. Qu. lib. 1:

Vid. Diog. Laert. in Pyrrhon.

greatest Wits took up in Scepticism, or little better. No man had studied all the Hypotheses of Philosophy more, or understood them better, or had better explained them than *Tully*, and yet at last all concluded in uncertainty, as he often professes: the like may be said of *Varro*, *Cotta*, and others.

The Doctrine of Philosophy concerning God and Providence, and a Future State, was very imperfect and uncertain, as *Socrates* himself declared just before his death: but what could be certain to him, that profest to doubt of every thing; g) *Varro* computed near three hundred Opinions concerning the *Summum Bonum*; they were so far from being able to give any certain rules and directions for the Government of our Lives that they could by no means agree in what the chief happiness of men consists, or what the aim and design of our Actions ought to be. *Plato* taught the lawfulness and expediency of mens having their Wives in common; and both *Socrates* and *Cato* must hold a community of Wives lawful, as we learn from their Practice: for they lent out their Wives to others, as if it had been a very generous and friendly Act, and the very height and perfection of their Philosophy.

(b) It was a practice both among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, to part with their Wives to

other

(g) Aug. de Civ. l. 19. c. 1.

(b) Alex. ab Alex. lib. 1. c. 24.

other men; though *Mercer* thinks the *Romans* were divorced from their Wives before others took them; because *Cato* is blamed for taking his Wife again after the death of *Hortensius*, without the solemnity of a new Marriage. Fornication was so far from being disallowed by the Heathens, that it was rather recommended

(b) Horat. Serm. Cic. prom. Coelio. lib. i. sat. 2.

(b) as a remedy against Adulterers by *Cato* himself. Many of the Philosophers held Self-murder lawful, and did themselves set an example of it to their Followers. The exposing of Children to be starved, or otherwise destroyed, was practised amongst the most civilized Heathen Nations; and it being foretold half a year before the Birth of *Augustus*, that a King of the *Romans* would be born that year, the Senate made a Decree, (i) *Nequis illo anno genitus educaretur.* (k) *Plutarch* himself says, that he could find nothing unjust or dishonest in the Laws of *Lycurgus*, though Theft, community of Wives, and the murdering of such Infants, as they saw weak and sickly, and therefore thought they would prove unfit to serve the commonwealth, were a part of those Laws.

(i) Sueton. August. c. 94. (k) Plutarch in Lycurg.

Revenge was esteemed not only lawful but honourable, and a desire of popular Fame and Vain Glory were reckoned among the Vertues of the Heathens, and were the greatest motive and encouragement they had to

to any other Vertue, (l) *Plutarch* tells us of *Aristides* so famed for Justice, that tho he were strictly just in private affairs, yet in things of publick concernment, he made no scruple to act according as the present condition of the Commonwealth seemed to require. For it was his Maxim that in such cases Justice must give way to expediency: and he gives an instance, how *Aristides* advised the *Athenians* to act contrary to their most solemn contract and oath, imprecating upon himself the punishment of the perjury to avert it from the Commonwealth. *Tully*, in the Third Book of his Offices, where he treats of the strictest Rules of Justice, and proposes so many admirable Examples of it, yet resolves the notion of Justice only into a principle of Honour, upon which he concludes, that no man should do a dishonest Action, though he could conceal it both from God and Men, and determines that an Oath is but an Appeal to a man's own Mind or Conscience. *Cum vero jurato dicenda sententia sit, meminerit Deum se adhibere testem, id est (ut arbitror) mentem suam, qua nihil homini dedit ipse Deus divinius.*

(l) Plut. in Aristide.

The *Indians* themselves, whatever may be thought to the contrary, have naturally as good Sense and Parts as other people; which (m) *Acosta* sets himself to

(m) Jos. Acost. Hist. lib. iv. c. 2.

prove in divers instances : but they had less communication with those, who retained revealed Religion ; and by their own vices and the subtilty of the Devil, the Notions, which they had received from it, were lost or perverted.

The *Egyptians*, who were so famous for their Learning, are a great instance how poor a thing humane Reason is without the Assistance of Divine Revelation : for all their profound Learning did but lead them to the grossest Idolatry, whilst they conceived God to be only an *Anima Mundi*, and therefore to be worshipped in the several parts and species of the Universe. The Stoicks in effect held the same Error, and taught (n), that there is nothing incorporeal. But when the excellency of the Christian Morals began to be so generally observed and taken notice of, the last Refuge of Philosophy was in the Moral Doctrines of the Stoicks. For almost all the latter Philosophers were of this Sect, which they refined and improved as well as they were able that they might have something to oppose to the Morality taught, (and practised too) by the Christians (o). But the Ancient Stoicks had been the Patrons and Advocates of the worst vices, and had filled the Libraries with their obscene Books.

(n) Tull. Acad. Qu. lib. i.

(a) Theophil. ad Autelych. lib. iii.

The

II. The Stoicks first sprang from the *Cynicks*, that impudent and beastly Sect of Philosophers, and they refined themselves but by degrees. *Zeno*, who had as great Honour done him by the *Athenians*, as ever any Philosopher had, under the Notion of his Vertue, taught that men ought to have their Wives in common, and would have been put to death by the Laws of most Nations for sins against Nature. (p) *Chrysippus* taught the worst of Incest, as that of Fathers with their Daughters, and of Sons with their Mothers; and besides, his opinion for eating humane Flesh, and the like; his Books were filled with such obscene Discourses, as no modest man could read. *Athenodorus* a Stoick, being Library-keeper at *Pergamns*, cut all such ill Passages out of the Books of the Stoicks, but he was discovered, and those Passages were inserted again. But these Philosophers might do as they pleased; for they pretended to be exempt from sin and the stoical Philosophy in the Original and fundamental Doctrines of it is nothing, as *Tully* observed, but a vain pomp and boast of words, which at first raise admiration, but when thoroughly considered are ridiculous; as that men must live without love or hatred, or anger, or any other passion; that all sins are equal, and that it is the same Crime whether a man mur-

(p) Diog. Laert. in Zenon. & Chrysipp.

(*) Tull. pro Muræna. ther his Father or kill a Cock, (*) as Tully says, if there be no occasion for it. And it no wonder that *Plutarch* and others wrote purposely to expose the stoical Philosophy, upon its old and genuine principles: but the latter Stoicks being very sensible of the many defective and indefensible parts of their Philosophy endeavoured to mollify what seemed too harsh and absurd, that they might bring their own as near the Christian Doctrine as they could. *Quintilian* will not allow, that *Seneca* was any great Philosopher, but says that his main talent lay in declaiming against vice, (q) in *Philosophia parum diligens, egregius tamen vitiorum insectator fuit.* It was rather the Art and Design of *Seneca*, who knew wherein the strength and defects of his Philosophy lay, to endeavor to give it all the advantage he could, and to recommend it to the world by exposing the Follies and Vices of men, rather than by instructing them in the Notions of his own Sect. But (r) this notwithstanding was one of his Rules, *nonnunquam & usque ad ebrietatem veniendum* and when he had expos'd the cruelties, the filthiness, and the absurdities of the Religions in use amongst the Heathens, in a Book written upon that subject; yet, says he, (s) *quæ omnia sapiens servabit, tanquam legibus jussa, non tanquam Diis grata.* And Tully likewise in divers places, when he

(*) Tull. pro Muræna.

(q) Quint. Inst. lib. x. c. 15.

(r) Sen de Tranqu. Animi. c. 15.

(s) Aug. Civit. Dei lib. vi. c. x.

he has reasoned against the absurdities of their Religion, resolves the obligation to observe it into the Duty which men are bound to pay to the Laws of the Government, under which they live: their Philosophy, it seems, taught them, that we must obey Men rather than God. But they held no more than (t) *Socrates* had taught and practised before them, *Epictetus* himself, who has set off the Heathen Morality to the best advantage, cannot be excused from as great errors and defects. He teaches also, that men should follow the Religion of their Country, whatever it be, *Enchirid. cap. xxxviii.* He allows too great indulgence to lust, cap. xlvii. And when he proposes Rules of Vertue, and cautions to arm men against Vice and Temptation, how much short doth he fall of the Christian Doctrine? If any man, says he, tell you, that such an one hath spoken ill of you, make no Apology for your self, but answer, "He did not know my other faults, " or else he would not have charged me " with these only, cap. xlviii. This is a fine saying, a pretty turn of thought, but what is there in it comparable to that awful and sacred Promise, *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you—rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, Mat. v. 11, 12.* Again, "when a man values himself, says

(s) Xenophon. Memorab. lib.

Epicætus, "for being able to understand
 "and explain the Books of *Chrysippus*, say
 "you to your self, unless *Chrysippus* had
 "written obscurely, this man would have
 "had nothing to boast of. But what do
 "I design? To study Nature, and follow
 "it? cap. lxxiii. This is no ill Satyr upon
 the vanity of men; but is there any thing
 in it like that Piety and Authority, with
 which *St. Paul* reproves the same vice?
 1 *Cor.* viii. 1, 2, 3. The best thing that can
 be said of the Heathen Philosophers is,
 that most of them frequently confess the
 great imperfection of their Philosophy,
 and placed their greatest wisdom in this,
 This they were more sensible than others
 of their ignorance: and *Socrates* profess
 that to be the Reason, why the Oracle of
Apollo declared him to be the wisest man,
 because he knew how ignorant he was,
 better than other men did. As to the *Chi-
 nese* Philosophy we know little of it, their
 (u) Books of Philosophy being all destroy-
 ed at the command of a Tyrant, who
 reigned about two hundred years before
 Christ: from the Fragments which were
 afterwards gathered up, and yet remain
 among them, we can only perceive that
Confucius, and the rest of their best Philo-
 sopher taught no more than what they had
 learnt by Tradition from their Ancestors;
 and when they forsook this Tradition they
 fell

(u) Confuc
 lib. iii. Par.
 4. p. 36. &
 Philippi
 Couplet
 Proem.
 Declar.

fell into the grossest errors, which are
 maintained by the learned men amongst
 them at this day.

II. Whatever there is of excellency in
 the Philosophy of the Heathens is owing to
 Revelation. It is generally supposed, that
 humane Reason could have discovered the
 more common and obvious Precepts of
 Morality, contained in the Scriptures; but
 it is more probable, that it could not
 have discovered most of them, if we may
 judge by the gross absurdities, which we
 find as to some particulars, in the best
 Systems of Heathen Philosophy, and from
 the general practice of offering up men
 for sacrifices to their Gods, and of casting
 away and exposing their Children in the
 most civilized Nations. But it is evident
 from what has been already proved at
 large, that the Heathens were not left
 destitute of many helps and advantages
 from the Scriptures, which divers of the
 Philosophers had read: and many things,
 which seem now to be deductions from
 natural Reason might have their Original
 from Revelation: for things once disco-
 vered seem easie and obvious to men,
 which they would never have been able
 to discover of themselves. We wonder
 now, how men should ever suppose there
 could be no Antipodes, and are apt to ad-
 mire how *America* could lie so long con-

cealed, rather than how it came at last to be discovered : and the case is the same in many other Discoveries, especially in moral Truths, which are so agreeable to Reason, that they may seem the natural Productions of it, though a contrary custom and inclination, and the subtlety of Satan working upon our depraved Nature might perhaps have made it very difficult, if not impossible, without a Revelation, to discern many Doctrines even of Morality, which now are most common and familiar to us. What Maxim is more agreeable, and therefore, as one would think, more obvious to humane Reason, than that every man should do to others, as he would have them do to him? and yet *Spartianus* an Heathen Historian says, that *Alexander Severus* had this excellent rule of natural Justice and Equity either from the Jews or Christians. There is no Book of Scripture which seems to contain plainer and more obvious things, than the Proverbs of *Solomon*, and (x) yet an Author of great Learning and Judgment has given an Essay, how a considerable defect of Learning may be supplied out of this very Book, producing such cautions, instructions, and axioms from thence, relating to the business and government of humane Life, in all varieties of occasion, as are no where else to be met

(x) *Ld. Bacon Advanc of Learning B.viii. c.2.*

met withal. No man can tell, how far humane Reason could have proceeded without Revelation, since it never was without it, but always argued from those Principles, which were at first delivered by God himself to *Noah*, and were propagated amongst his Posterity throughout all Ages and Nations, though they were more corrupted and depraved in some Ages and Nations than in others.

(y) *Plato* derives the Original of all Laws from Revelation, and the Doctrines of Morality of the most ancient Philosophers were a kind of Cabbala, consisting of general Maxims and Proverbs without argument or deduction from Principles; and it is the same thing at this day in those Countries, where *Aristotle's* Philosophy has not prevailed, who was one of the first that undertook to argue closely from Principles in Morality. And in other parts of Philosophy, I shall prove by some remarkable instances, that humane reason failed them in the explication of things which were generally received and acknowledged. The existence of God is clearly and unanswerably demonstrated by *Tully*, and (z) the Unity of the Godhead is as plainly asserted by him; with what strength of Reason with what plainness, with what assurance doth (a) *Balbus* the Stoick speak concerning the existence of

(y) *Plat. de Legib. Dialog. 1.*

(z) *Tull. de Legib. lib. i.*

(a) *Tul. de Natur. Deor. lib. ii.*

the ii.

the Deity, but when he would explain the Divine Nature, he describes a mere *Anima Mundi*, and exposes himself to the scorn and laughter of his Adversary; which shews, that humane Reason could go no further, than to discover the existence of God and that we can know little of his nature but by Revelation, and that whatsoever true and just notions the Heathens had of the Divine Nature must be chiefly ascribed to that.

That the world was created the Philosophers before *Aristotle* generally asserted, and that Water was the first matter out of which it was formed, is acknowledged by (b) *Aristotle*, to be esteemed the most ancient opinion; but when he set himself to argue the point, he concluded the world to be eternal, which, according to modern Philosophy, is as absurd and impossible as any thing that can be imagined.

The Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul was delivered down from all Antiquity, as *Tully* assures us, but the Antients gave no reasons to prove it by, they only received it by Tradition: *Plato* was the first who attempted to prove it by Argument: for though *Pherecydes*, *Syrus*, and *Pythagoras* had asserted it, yet they acquiesced in Tradition, by which they had received it from the Eastern Nations; but

Plato,

(b) *Arist.*
de cœlo
lib. i. c. 10
Metaphys.
lib. i. c. 3.

Plato, (as it is generally supposed) conversing with the Jews in *Egypt*, or at his coming into *Italy*, being there acquainted (c) with the Doctrine of the Souls immortality amongst other notions of the *Pythagoreans*, began to argue upon it, but not being able to make it fully out has only shewn how far reason could proceed upon those grounds, which were then known in the world from Revelation. *Seneca*, (d) though he sometimes asserts the immortality of the Soul, yet at other times doubts of it, and even denies that the Soul has any subsistence in a separate State. And yet this Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, which the greatest of the Heathen Philosophers could not certainly prove from reason, was firmly believed even amongst (e) *Barbarians*.

(f) *Confucius*, the famous *Chinese* Philosopher, profess himself not the Author, but the Relater only of the Doctrine which he taught, as he had received it delivered down from all Antiquity, and (g) *Aristotle* has declared, that the Antients left many Traditions, which their Posterity had corrupted, but from the remains of those Traditions we know that they were originally derived from Revelation. The first of the Philosophers that taught the immortality of the Soul was (h) *Pherecydes* and he left his Writings to *Thales*, from whence

(c) *Tull.*
Tusc.
lib. i.

(d) *Epist.*
54. 102.

(e) *Grœc.*
de verit.
lib. i. Anot.
(f) *Confuc.*
lib. iii.
Part. 4. p.

(g) *Arist.*
Metaph.
lib. xii. c. 1.

(h) *T.*
Tusc.
lib. i.

whence he had the notion, that all things were produced from water, *Pythagoras* was a Scholar of *Pherecydes*, and *Pythagoras*, *Plato* and *Aristotle* conversed with the Learned Jews. (i) *Socrates* disputed of a future State from Tradition, and (k) profess that he always followed the Tradition which had descended from Antiquity, and that he was at a loss whenever that failed him. (l) And this Tradition could not have its Rise from the *Greeks*, who were confess to understand little or nothing of Antiquity. The notions in Philosophy of the latter Heathens, were much improved by *Ammonius*, a Christian and a Teacher of Philosophy at *Alexandria*. And we find that upon the propagation of the Gospel, Moral Philosophy in a few years attained to greater perfection, than ever it had done before, as we may see in the works of *Seneca*, *Epictetus*, *Plutarch*, *M. Antoninus*, *Maximus Tyrinus*, and others.

We may therefore reasonably conclude that the Precepts and Rules of Morality, which Philosophers all along taught, had their original from Revelation, rather than from the strength and sagacity of their own reason, because they err in things no less obvious to natural reason, and it appears that they had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the Scriptures, and that they spared no pains either by
read.

reading or conversation, in their own, or in foreign Countries, in their search and enquiries after truth.

III. If the Heathen Philosophy had been as certain and excellent, as it can be pretended to be, yet there had been great need of a Divine Revelation. For 1. The rules of Philosophy lie scattered up and down in large and learned works, mixt with many wrong and absurd notions, and therefore must be in great measure useless; how certain and excellent soever they may be in themselves, they can be no rule of Life to us. No perfect rule of Manners is to be found in any one Author; and if it were possible to compile such a rule out of them all, yet what man is able to collect them? (m) *Lactantius* is of opinion, that if all the truths dispersed up and down among the several Sects of Philosophers could be collected together into one System, they would make up a Body of Philosophy agreeable to the Christian Doctrine; but then he concludes it to be impossible for any man to make such a collection, without a supernatural Assistance. And if there were no other reason for it but this, it is no wonder that we find (n) the XII Tables preferred before all the Writings of the Philosophers. If there be nothing so absurd, as *Tully* says, but the Philosophers have taught it, then
it

(m) *Lact.*
de vit. Beat.
c. 7.

(n) *Tull.*
de Orat.
lib. i.

(i) *Plat.*
Phaed.
(k) *Plat.*
Phileb.

(l) *Plat.*
Timæ.

The Reasonableness and Certainty

it necessary that men should not be left to the uncertainties and absurdities of Philosophy: for though some few of them might be free from such extravagancies, yet their Notions were no Rule or Standard to the rest, and the best were not without many great Errors.

2. The Rules of Philosophy were no better than good Advice, and carried no Authority with them to oblige men in Conscience; they had not the force of a Law, and failing in this necessary point, whatever their intrinsic worth had been, they never could have had that effect upon the Lives of men, which Revealed Religion has. Vertue was propounded by Philosophers rather as a matter of Honor and Decency, than of strict Duty; those were esteemed and admired indeed that observed it, but such as did not, only wanted that commendation. Some Philosophers spoke great and excellent things, but they past rather for wise sayings, than for Laws of Nature: their own Reputation, which was greater or less with different sorts of men, was the only Authority they had: it might be prudence to do as they taught, but there appeared no absolute necessity for it. They commonly represented Vertue as very lovely, with many very great and powerful charms, and all that were of another mind, did
not

not know a true Beauty, and that was an intolerable disgrace: the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments in the next Life was little insisted upon by them. They recommended Vertue for 'tis own sake, not as it is enjoyned by God, and will be rewarded by him, and the contrary punished; and those, who could not soar to their Heights, were rather the worse than the better for such Doctrines, which they looked upon as the impracticable speculations of some, who had a mind to speak great things. And they often spoke the Truth indeed, which they had from Tradition, or from the excellency of their own Wit and Genius, but they were not able to make it out by any such Principles; as are wont to influence and govern humane Actions. Accordingly we find, that as the several Sects of Philosophy suited to the Tempers and Humors of particular men, so far they prevailed, and no farther. The curious and inquisitive betook themselves, to the Academicks, the soft and effeminate to the Epicureans, and the Morose to the Stoicks; men applyed themselves to what ever opinion they liked best, and found most agreeable to their Nature and Disposition. Thus a severe and haughty Gravity made up the Composition of *Cato*; it had been hard for him to avoid a Stoick, and he might probably have founded that
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Sect, if it had not been known in the World before. The Philosophers had no Authority to promise rewards or to threaten punishments upon the observation or neglect of their Precepts, and therefore every man was at his liberty to chuse or to reject what they taught, and divers of them were sensible of this unavoidable defect in all humane Doctrines, and therefore pretended to Revelation.

There is no inconvenience therefore in supposing, that many of the Precepts contained in the *Proverbs*, and other Books of Scripture might be known without a Revelation: for there is notwithstanding very good Reason, why they should be inserted into the Scripture. Because the Scriptures have the Authority of a Divine Law, and are to be looked upon, not as a System of Ethicks, or a collection of Moral Precepts, but as a Body of Laws given out upon divers occasions, and as Rules of Instruction, which at the same time both shew us our Duty, and command our Obedience. It is not expected that Kings in their Laws should argue more profoundly than other men do, but they should command more effectually than others can teach; they do not dispute, but pronounce and dictate, what their subjects must take notice of at their peril. And it is no diminution to a Prince's Authority

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to command the most known and obvious things, though it may be a fault in the subject to need such commands. And God in his word did not design to furnish us with a Treatise of Philosophy, to gratify our curiosity, with strange and new notions, and make us profound Scholars; but to speak to the necessities of men, and put them in mind of known Duties, to appeal to their own Consciences, and to enforce those notions of Good and Evil, which natural reason perhaps might suggest to them, by the authority of a revealed Religion, and a divine Law, established upon Rewards and Punishments.

3 Though the philosophers were able to discern something more than other men, yet they durst not openly declare what they knew, but were over-born with the errors and vices of the Times and Countries in which they lived, even to the commission of Idolatry, and the worst of vices, and therefore their Doctrines whatever they were, could do but little good towards the reformation of the World. I shall not enquire into the Reports concerning *Socrates* and *Plato*, *Seneca* and *Cato* himself, but only observe that *Socrates*, who was the only Martyr among the Philosophers, for the truth, yet when he comes to die, speaks with no assurance

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of a Future State, and ordered a Cock to be sacrificed to *Æsculapius*, which can hardly be reconciled to that Doctrine, for which he is supposed to die. And after his Death, how did his Friends and Disciples behave themselves? did they openly and courageously vindicate his innocence, and teach the Doctrine for which he suffered? did they not use all means to conceal and dissemble it? but Mankind stood in need of a perfect example of Virtue, and of such instructors, as should both teach and practise the Doctrines of it at their utmost peril, and of a succession of such men, as should bear Testimony to their Doctrine, both by the Miracles wrought during their Lives, and by the constancy of their Deaths.

4. As the Heathen Philosophy wanted the authority of a Law, and the example of those who taught it; so it wanted the principal Motives to recommend the practice of it to the Lives of men. The Philosophers teach nothing of the exceeding Love of God towards us; of his desire of our happiness, and his readiness to assist and conduct us in the ways of Virtue. They owned no such thing as Divine Grace and Assistance towards the attainment of Virtue, and the perseverance of it. —

(o) Tull. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii.

(o) *Virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit, nimirum recte: propter virtutem enim*

enim jure laudamur, & in virtute recte gloriamur, quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo, non a nobis haberemus — nam quis, quod bonus vir esset, gratias Diis egit unquam — Jovemque optimum maximum ob eas res appellant, non quod nos justos, temperatos, sapientes efficiat, sed quod salvos, incolumes, opulentos, copiosos. This occasioned those (p) insolent Boasts of the Stoicks, equaling (p) Sen Epist. 53. themselves to the Gods, and sometimes even preferring themselves before them, because they had difficulties to encounter, which made their conquests of vice, and their improvements in virtue more glorious, than they supposed the like excellencies to be in their Gods, who were good by the necessity of their own Nature.

Wherefore, tho the Rules of Philosophy had been never so perfect, yet they must needs be ineffectual, being so difficult to find out, and so unactive and dead, when they were discovered, without that Authority, and Life, and Energy, that may be had from Divine Revelation, which there was a necessity for, not only to supply the imperfections, and correct the errors of Philosophy, but to enforce the Doctrines of it, tho they had been never so true and perfect.

C H A P. VI.

The Novelty and Defect in the Promulgation of the Mahometan Religion.

THe Novelty of the Mahometan Religion, in respect both of the Old and New Testament, is past all dispute. And this Religion, notwithstanding all its sensual allurements, owes its Propagation solely to the power of the Sword. For though the Alcoran has been translated into most of the Languages in use amongst Christians, yet it has never been known to make any Profelytes, but by force of Arms. At first this Religion had many circumstances for its advantage, which might, in humane probability, gain it success in the world. It was begun in Rebellion, and in a final Revolt from the Emperor *Heraclius*, and besides this popular and seducing Temptation of Licence and Violence, *Mahomet* added the enticements of Lust and Sensuality; he forbid them indeed some things, but such as he could easily see they would part with for the free and unbounded enjoyment of others: then he pretended to found his Doctrine on the Authority of *Moses* and of Christ, saying that

that Christ had promised to send him; all which made his Religion find the more easy entertainment amongst both Jews and Christians. It was but like the Heresy of the *Gnosticks* at the first, and not altogether so gross, and this must needs encline all of Seditious and lewd principles to come in to him, being glad of such a colour for their wickedness; and it had the advantage of Power and Force to make it more lasting, than other such Blasphemies have been.

Christ on the contrary forbid Resistance of the supreme power upon any terms whatsoever; he asserted the Authority of *Moses* but so, as to abolish the ceremonial part of the Law, which was what the Jews were most fond of: so that this very thing made the Jews the most implacable enemies of Christianity, and brought Christians into contempt among the Heathen: for nothing could make the Gospel of less account in their esteem, than to deduce its Authority from the Books of the Jews, who soon after the crucifixion of Christ became vile and contemptible in the eyes of all the World. It can be no great wonder to see men drawn into those vices under the pretence of Religion, which no Laws nor Punishments can restrain them from; but for a Religion that forbids all vice under the severest penalties, to prevail in a

vicious world is truly miraculous. Besides, it is Death, by the Law of *Mahomet*, to contradict the Alcoran, men are forbid all disputation and discourse about Religion, they are charged to believe none but *Mahometan*, and to look upon all others as unworthy of all manner of conversation. So that the Sword in the hands of furious and ignorant Zealots is the only way by which that Religion was designed to be propagated.

But notwithstanding all these compliances with the Lusts and Passions of men, if we take in all Ages since the Incarnation of Christ, the Christian Religion (not to mention the Jewish) has had a much larger propagation than ever Mahometanism has had; and has at all times been taught in more parts of the world, and even amongst Mahometans themselves. And the Alcoran itself asserting the Divine Authority and Mission both of *Moses* and *Christ*, serves in some measure to propagate the Faith of the Old and New Testament; so far, I mean, as to give an advantage and opportunity for men to make enquiry into them, and become acquainted with them.

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C H A P. VII.

The want both of Prophecies and Miracles in the Mahometan Religion.

MAhometanism is grounded neither upon Prophecies nor Miracles. *Mahomet* indeed calls himself Prophet very solemnly, but we have but this one instance of his Prophetick Spirit. (a) *When the Prophet went to visit one of his Wives, God revealed to him, what she desired to say to him; he approved one part and rejected the other: when he told his Wife what was in her will to speak to him, she demanded of him, who had revealed it to him. He that knoweth all things hath revealed it to me, that ye may be converted; your hearts are inclined to do what is forbidden; if ye act any thing against the Prophet, know that God is his Protector.* There is not one circumstance to make the story credible. (a) Alcoran c. 66.

Mahomet pretended to no Miracles, but when he has raised that objection, (as he often doth) that the world would not believe in him, unless they saw some Miracle, he answers (b), *I am not sent but to preach the word of God.* Tho afterwards he mentions that ridiculous story of the Moons being divided, in these words: (b) Alcor. c. 13.

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(c) *The*

(c) Ib. c. 54. (c) *The day of Judgment approacheth, the Moon was divided into two parts, nevertheless Infidels believe not Miracles, when they see them; they say that this is Magick; they lye, and follow but their Passion, but all is written. Here is no proof, nor any pretence to it, but only a confident assertion of a thing ridiculous. And yet unless we will believe this Prophecy, and this Miracle, there is nothing in the whole Alcoran either of Miracle or Prophecy, to give it any authority, except that must be accounted one, which he so often boasts of, viz. its wonderful Doctrine and Eloquence, for (d) he challenges all the world to produce any thing like it, protesting (e) that he could neither write nor read, and therefore must needs have it by Inspiration. And he introduceth God swearing to the Truth of it, almost in every Chapter; and this is all he offers, in answer to the suspicions which he so frequently suggests men then had of his being an Impostor.*

(d) Ib. c. x, xi, xvi.
(e) C. vii.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Alcoran is false, absurd, and immoral.

I. **T**He Alcoran is false; as when it makes (a) the Virgin Mary Sister to Aaron; when it asserts that (b) Christ was not crucified, but one like him, in contradiction to the Testimony of Jews, Christians, and Heathens; and that Christ (c) prophesied of him by name, without the least proof or ground for it, but against all the evidence that can be, to the contrary.

(a) Ib. c. xix.
(b) Ib. c. iv.
(c) Ib. c. lxi.

II. The Alcoran contains things absurd and ridiculous: as in that story of the sleepers, (d) the Infidels say they were five, and that their Dog was the sixth; they speak by opinion, but the true Believers affirm them to be seven, and their Dog to be the eighth. And (e) in the story of Solomon's Army, composed of Men, Devils, and Birds; of the Queen of the Fismires; and Solomon's discourse with the bird called the hoopoe, which he had in his hand.

(d) C. xviii.
(e) Ib. c. xxvii.

III. The Doctrine of the Alcoran is impious and blasphemous. It denies all the things which are necessary to the glory of his Alcoran, and his first Particulars well

well known, and his allowance of many Wives; but perhaps his injustice is not so generally taken notice of, (f) in permitting the professors of his Religion to take away their Slaves Wives from them.

The Law of *Mahomet* proceeds from a savage and cruel spirit, obliging those that embrace it to destroy all that are not of it; however the *Mahometans* have not always acted according to the cruelty of their Religion, humane Nature not being always able to act so much contrary to itself. But this is *Mahomet's* Doctrine, (g)

(f) *Ib. c. iv. & xxiii.*
(g) *Ib. c. iii.* *God loveth not the unjust, he forgiveth sins to those that believe and extirpate Infidels.*

(h) *Ib. c. iv.* *(h) If they forsake it (the Law of God, pretended to be set down in the Alcoran) kill them, where you find them. Be not negligent to pursue the Infidels. And this the*

(i) *Tavern. Voyage de Ind. lib. iii. 24.* *(i) Faquirs at their return from Mecha are very mindful of, with a furious zeal killing all they can that they meet, who are not Mahometans, till they are killed themselves, and then they are reputed Saints, and Prayers are made at their Graves.*

(k) *Sandys Trav. lib. i. 54.* Such is the Alcoran as we now have it, and yet it is not now as it was at first written by *Mahomet*; (k) many alterations have been made in it by inserting some things, and striking out others, and taking some of the absurdities away: *Mahomet* the Second particularly is said to have made great

great alterations and additions (l). But the *Persians*, the followers of *Haly*, charge *Abu-Beker*, *Omar*, and *Ozman*, whom the *Turks* follow, with falsifying the Alcoran. (l) *Ricauts Hist. of the Ottom. Empire lib. ii. c. 10.*

C H A P IX

Of Mahomet,

AFTER this account of *Mahomet's* Alcoran, there will be no need to say much of his Person: the general Doctrines of the Alcoran shew him to have been lustful, proud, fierce and cruel; but as if that were not enough, he has taken care to insert such particulars concerning himself, as to suffer no man to be ignorant of the Spirit and Temper, by which he was guided in penning it. He blasphemously introduceth God thus speaking to him (a). (a) *Alcor. c. xxxiii.* *O Prophet, we permit thee to know the women, to whom thou hast given Dowry, the Women Slaves, which God hath given thee, the Daughters of thine Unkles, and of thine Aunts, that have abandoned with thee the company of the wicked, and the true believing Wife, that shall be given thee, if thou wilt marry her, and that she be not the Wife of a true Believer. It seems he gave himself the liberty to take away the Wives of any that*

The Reasonableness and Certainty

that were not of his Religion. *Thou shalt retain whom of thy Wives thou shalt desire to retain, and shalt repudiate such as thou shalt desire to repudiate, and shalt lye with them that shall please thee.* By this means his Family of Wives became pretty numerous, some say they were fifteen, others say, one & twenty beside Concubines; and therefore it was fit he should take some care to keep them true to him, and so he bespeaks them after this manner (b). *Oh! ye wives of the Prophet! such of you as shall be unchaste, shall be punished doubly more than other women; this is a thing easy to God: such among you as shall obey God and his Prophet, and shall do good works, shall be rewarded more than other women, an exceeding great reward is prepared for you. Oh, ye Wives of the Prophet! ye are not like other women of the world, fear God, and believe not in the discourse of such as have a design to seduce you; speak with civility, abide in your Houses, go not forth to make your beauty appear, and to make a shew, as did the ignorant of old.* This explains what was mentioned before of a Revelation Mahomet pretended to have concerning something that one of his Wives was to say to him; he had a mind to make them believe that he knew what ever they did or said, that so he might keep them in awe, that they might not dare to prove false to him.

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His Pride is evident in this which follows, (c) *Ye that believe, enter not into the Houses of the Prophet without permission, except at the hour of Repast, and that by chance, and without design; if ye are invited enter with freedom; when ye shall have taken your repast, depart out of the house, and tarry not to discourse one with another, this molested the Prophet, he is ashamed to tell you the truth.* But this is not all, his number of Wives made him incurably jealous, and therefore he adds, *you ought not to importune the Prophet of God, neither to know his Wives, this would be a most enormous sin.*

The fierceness of Mahomet's Spirit may be seen by this one saying, (d) *He that is angry that God giveth succour and protection to Mahomet in this world, let him tye a cord to the beam of his house, and hang himself, he shall see if his choler will be allayed.* It is notorious, that he set up his New Doctrine in oppressing his own Country-men, who would not submit to his Imposture first, and in Rebellion against the Emperor *Heracius*, then at war with the *Persians*, afterwards; and his Alcoran is fit only for a *Saracen* Camp, preaching Lust to his followers, but blood and destruction towards all others.

This may satisfy any man, that there is nothing in the Author of the Mahometan Religion, nor in the Religion itself, which may

(b) Ib.

(d) Ib. sc. xxii.

The Reasonableness and Certainty

may incline him to believe it to be of Divine Revelation. But whoever would know more of this vile *Imposture*, may see it fully displayed in the *Life of Mahomet*, lately published by the Learned Dr. *Prideaux*.

THE
Reasonableness and Certainty

OF THE
Christian Religion.

PART IV.

CHAP. I.

That there is as great certainty of the Truth of the Christian Religion, as there is of the Being of God.

FROM what has been discoursed, the Truth of the Christian Religion is evident by all the arguments, by which any Religion can possibly be proved to be divine; and if there be any such thing as true Religion, the Christian Religion must be it: and if this be made appear, it is all that need be said in defence of the Christian Religion, to any one but an Atheist.

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The Scriptures are defective in nothing that is requisite in a Divine Revelation, but have all that can be required in the highest degree ; to instance here only in Miracles, and in those only of our Saviour and his Apostles. Our Saviour wrought his Miracles in the midst of his Enemies, and extorted a Confession from the Devils themselves of his Divine Power. And if the Apostles had not been well assured, and absolutely certain of his Resurrection, they would never have had the confidence, and the folly, (for it could have been no less) to maintain so soon after his Death, in *Jerusalem*, the City where he was Crucify'd, that he was risen from the Dead ; they would never have chosen that, above all places, to preach this Doctrine, and work their Miracles in, if they had not been true : at least, they would never have done it, at the great and solemn Feast of Pentecost, to provoke the *Jews* to expose them to all the World for Impostors ; no, they would have taken time to have laid their design with some better appearance and contrivance : to be sure, they would have avoided *Jerusalem* as much as they could, and above all times, at so solemn a Festival as that of Pentecost, they would have gone rather to the remotest corners of the Earth to have told their story, than have run the hazard

hazard of such a discovery. But when they stood the Test of all, that the *Jews* could say or do to them, when in that very City, where he had been so lately crucify'd, they told the *Jews* to their face, and before that numerous concourse of People, which was then met together at *Jerusalem*, that they were Murtherers, that they murder'd their Messias, but that he was risen from the Dead, and that by vertue of his Resurrection they spoke those Languages, and did those Works, which they then saw and heard. This was plain and open dealing, and there could be no deceit in it ; if any thing of this could have been disproved they had been for ever silenced, but their worst enemies were so far from being able to disprove what they said, that about three thousand Converts were made on the day of Pentecost.

The innocent and divine Life of our Saviour, the holiness and excellency of his Doctrine, the simplicity, and meekness, and constancy of his Disciples, the continuance of Miracles for several Ages in the Church, the wonderful Propagation of the Gospel by a few, poor, ignorant, despised, and persecuted Men, every passage, every circumstance, in the whole dispensation of the Gospel, is full of evidence in proof of it. But thus much in this place

place shall suffice, all particulars having been largely insisted upon in their proper places.

And since, as sure as there is a God, there must be a Revealed Religion; if any Man will dispute the Truth of the Christian Religion, let him instance in any other Religion that can make a better Plea, and has more certainty that it came from God; let him produce any other Religion that has more visible Characters of Divinity in it, and we will not scruple to be of it; but if it be impossible for him to shew any such, (as has been proved) then he ought to be of this, since there must be some Revealed Religion; and if that Religion, which has more evidence for it than any other Religion can be pretended to have, and all that it could be requisite for it to have, supposing it true, and which it is therefore impossible to discover to be false if it were so. If this Religion be not true, God must be wanting to mankind in what concerns their eternal Interest and Happiness; he must be wanting to himself, and to his own Attributes of Goodness, Justice and Truth. And therefore he, that upon a due examination of all the Reasons and Motives to it, will not be a Christian, can be no better than an Atheist, if he discern the consequence of things, and will hold to his own Principles, for there

there can be no Medium, if we rightly consider the Nature of God, and of the Christian Religion; but as sure as there is a God (and nothing can be more certain) the Gospel was revealed by him.

C H A P. II.

The Resolution of Faith.

HAVING proved the Truth and Certainty of our Religion, I shall in the last place, upon these Principles, give a Resolution of our Faith, which is a subject that has caused such unnecessary and unhappy Disputes amongst Christians in these latter Ages; for in the Primitive Times, this was no matter of Controversie, as indeed it could not then, and ought not now to be.

1. Considering the Scriptures only as an History, containing the Actions and Doctrines of *Moses* and the Prophets, and of our Saviour and his Apostles, we have the greatest humane Testimony, that can be, of men, who had all the opportunities of knowing the truth of those Miracles &c. which gave Evidence and Authority to the Doctrines, as Revealed from God, and who could have no Interest to deceive others,

others, but exposed themselves to all manner of dangers, and infamy, and torments, by bearing Testimony to the Truth of what is contained in the Scriptures; whereas Impostures are wont to be invented, not to incur such sufferings, but to avoid them, or to obtain the advantages and pleasures of this world. And so this Testimony amounts to a moral certainty, or as it is properly enough called by some, to a moral infallibility because it implies a moral impossibility of our being deceived by it: such a certainty it is, as that nothing with any reason can be objected against it. We can have as little reason to doubt, that Christ and his Apostles did, and suffered, and taught, what the Scriptures relate of them, in *Jerusalem, Antioch, &c.* as that there ever were such places in the world; nay, we have that much better attested than this, for many men have died in Testimony of the Truth of it.

II. This Testimony being considered with respect to the nature of the thing testified, as it concerns eternal Salvation, which is of the greatest concernment to all mankind, it appears that Gods Veracity and Goodness are engaged, that we should not be deceived inevitably in a matter of this consequence: So that this Moral Infallibility becomes hereby Absolute

lute Infallibility: and that which was before but Humane Faith becomes Divine, being grounded not upon Humane Testimony, but upon the Divine Attributes, which do attest and confirm that Humane Testimony; and so Divine Testimony is the ultimate ground, why I believe the will of God to be delivered in the Scriptures; it is no particular, revealed Testimony indeed, but that which is equivalent to it, *viz.* the constant Attestation of God by his Providence. For it is repugnant to the very notion of a God, to let men be deceived, without any possible help or remedy, in a matter of such importance. And so we have the ground of our Faith absolutely Infallible, because it is evident from the Divine Attributes, that God doth confirm this Humane Testimony by his own.

III. The Argument then proceeds thus: If the Scriptures were false, it would be impossible to discover them to be so, and it is inconsistent with the Truth and Goodness of Almighty God to suffer a deceit of this nature to pass upon mankind, without any possibility of a discovery; therefore it follows, that they are not false. Here is 1. The object, or thing to be believed, *viz.* that the Revelation delivered to us in the Scriptures is from God. 2. The

Motive or Evidence to induce our Belief, *viz.* Humane Testimony. 3. A confirmation of that Testimony, or the Formal Principle and Reason of our Belief, *viz.* the Divine Goodness and Truth. The object therefore, or thing believed is the same to us that it was to those who saw the miracles by which the Scriptures stand confirmed, *viz.* the revealed Will of God: and the Ground or Foundation of our Belief is the same that theirs was, *viz.* the divine Goodness and Truth, whereby we are assured, that God would not suffer Miracles to be wrought in his own Name, according to Prophecies formerly delivered, and with all other circumstances of credibility, only to confirm a Lye. The only difference then between the resolution of Faith in us, and in the Christians who were converted by the Apostles themselves is this, that tho we believe the same things, and upon the same grounds and reasons with them, yet we have not the same immediate motives or evidence to induce our Belief; or to satisfy us in these reasons, and convince us, that the Revealed Will of God, contained in the Scriptures, is to be believed upon these grounds; that is, to satisfy and convince us that the belief of the Scriptures being the word of God is finally resolved into the authority of God

God himself, and is as well certified to us, as his Divine Attributes can render it. For they were assured of this, from what their own senses perceived, but we have our assurance of it from the Testimony of others.

The Question therefore will be, whether the motives and arguments for this Belief in us, or the means whereby we become assured, that the Revealed Will of God is contained in the Scriptures, be not as sufficient to produce a divine Faith in us, and to establish our Faith upon the divine authority, as the motives and arguments which those had, who lived with the Apostles, and saw their Miracles, could be to produce that Faith in them, which resolved itself into the divine authority. And this enquiry will depend upon these two things: 1. Whether we may not be assured of some things as certainly from the Testimony of others, as from our own Senses. 2. Whether this be not the present case, relating to the resolution of Faith. I shall therefore consider in the first place the certainty which we have for the matters of fact, by which the authority of the Scriptures is proved and confirmed to us, compared with the evidence of sense, and will then apply it to the resolution of Faith.

I. In many cases men seem generally agreed that there is as much cause to believe what they know from others, as what they see and experience themselves. For there may be such circumstances of credibility, as equal the evidence even of sense itself; no evidence can satisfy sense so much indeed, nor perhaps so much affect the passions, as that of sense; but there may be other evidence, which may give as clear conviction, and altogether as good satisfaction to our Reason, as that which is immediately derived from our senses, concerning the Being of Objects, or the Truth of matters of fact. Thus those who never travelled to the *Indies*, do as little doubt that there is such a place, as those who have been never so often there; and all men believe, there was such a man as *Julius Caesar*, with as little scruple as if they had lived in his time, and had seen and spoke with him. I suppose no man in his wits makes any more doubt, but there are such places as *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, from the constant report of Historians and Travellers, than if he had been in those places himself, and had lived the greatest part of his Life there: and the greatest Infidel that I know of, never pretended yet to disbelieve, that there was such a person as our Saviour Christ. But all men think themselves as well

well assured of things of this nature upon the credit of others, as if they had seen them themselves. For how doubtful and intricate soever some things may be, for want of Knowledge or credit in the Relaters; yet there are other things delivered with that agreement and certainty on all hands, that to doubt of them would be as unreasonable, as to doubt of what we ourselves see and hear.

And if our Saviour's Resurrection, for instance, be of this nature, we can with as little reason doubt of it, as if we had lived at that time, and had conversed with him after his Resurrection from the dead. But we have as great assurance that he was alive again after his Crucifixion, as that he ever lived at all; and we have at least all the assurance that there was such a person as Christ, that we can have, that there once lived any other man at that distance of time from us. We can no more doubt that our Saviour was born in the Reign of *Augustus Caesar*, and was crucified under *Tiberius*, than that there were once such Emperors in the world; nay, we have it much better attested that Christ was born, and was crucified, and rose again, than that there ever were such Princes as these two Emperors: for no man ever made it his business to go about the world to certify this, and to testify the truth of it,

it, at his death. But the Apostles themselves, and their Disciples and Converts, and innumerable others ever since, from the beginning of Christianity, have asserted the particulars of the Life, and Death and Resurrection of our Saviour, under all dangers, and torments, and deaths; and have made it their great aim and design, both living and dying, to bear Testimony to the Truth of the Gospel. So that a man may as well doubt of any matter of fact that ever was done before his own time, or at a great distance from him, as doubt of these fundamentals of the Christian Religion; and yet there is no man, but thinks himself as certain of some things at least, which were done a long time ago, or a great way off, as if he had been at the doing of them himself.

Indeed, in some respects we seem to have more evidence than these could have, that lived in the beginning of Christianity; for they could see but some Miracles, we have the benefit of all; they relyed upon their own senses, and upon the senses of such as they knew and conversed with; we upon the senses of innumerable people, who successively beheld them for the space of divers hundred years together: so that whoever will not believe the Scriptures, neither would he believe, though one rose from the dead; that is, though the greatest Miracle

racle were wrought for his conviction. This was said of the Old Testament, and therefore may with greater reason be said of That and the New both.

And we have besides, one sort of evidence, which those that lived at the first planting of Christianity could not have; for we see many of those Prophecies fulfilled, which our Saviour foretold concerning his Church; we know how it sprung up and flourished, and from what small and unlikely beginnings it has spread itself into all corners of the Earth, and continues to this day, notwithstanding all the malice of Men and Devils to root it out and destroy it. The continuance and success of the Gospel under so improbable circumstances was matter of Faith chiefly to the first Christians, but to us is matter of Fact, and the object of sense; they saw the work indeed prosper in their hands, but their Faith only could tell them, that it should flourish for so many Ages, as we know it has already done. This is a standing and invincible proof to us at this distance of time, and has the force of a twofold Argument, the one of a power of Miracles, the other of Prophecies: we know that a miraculous power has been manifested in conquering all opposition, and in a wonderful manner bringing those things to pass which to humane wisdom and power

power are altogether impossible. And the fulfilling hereby of Prophecies is a visible confirmation to us of the truth of those Miracles, which by the Testimony of others we believe to have been done by the Prophets, whose Prophecies we see fulfilled. And since it must be acknowledged that things may be so well attested, that we may with as much reason doubt of the truth of our own senses, as of the Authority, by which we are assured of the truth of them, and must turn Scepticks or worse, if we will not believe them; we may conclude as well upon the account of these Prophecies, which we our selves see fulfilled, as upon all other accounts, that the Historical evidence in proof of the Christian Religion, amounts to all the certainty that a matter of Fact is capable of, not excepting even that of sense itself.

II. Let us now apply all this to the Resolution of Faith, and give an account how a divine and infallible Faith may be produced in us. Humane Testimony is the Motive, by which we believe the Scriptures to contain God's revealed Will: this certifies us that such Miracles were wrought, and such Prophecies delivered, as give to the Scriptures the full evidence and authority of a Divine Revelation. If therefore it be enquired, why we believe

lieve the Scriptures to be the word of God? the Answer is, upon the account of the Miracles and Prophecies, which concurring with all other circumstances requisite in a Revelation, confirm the Truth of them. If it be asked, how we know that these Prophecies and Miracles are true and effectual, and not feigned, or insufficient; I answer, because we have them so related and attested, that considered barely as matter of Fact, they have all the credibility that any matter of Fact is capable of, and therefore may as safely be relied upon, as any thing which we do our selves see, or hear. If it be further urged that for all this I may be deceived, since all men are fallible, and no man is infallibly assured that there is such a place as *Rome*, who never saw it; though no man neither can any more doubt of it, than he can doubt whether there be such a place as *London*, who lives in it. I acknowledge that there is a bare possibility of being deceived in all humane evidence, but yet I deny that we can possibly be deceived in this case, because, though the evidence itself be humane, yet the things which it concerns are of that Nature, that God would never suffer the World to be thus long imposed upon in them, without all possibility of finding out the Truth. So that here we resolve our Faith into the di-
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The Reasonableness and Certainty

vine Authority, by reason of the same Miracles, by reason whereof the Eye-witnesses of them did resolve theirs into it, but they believed these Miracles as seen by themselves, and we believed them as seen, and witnessed by others, but both they and we believe them as the works of God himself.

It might have been alledged, if we had seen those Miracles that we might possibly be deceived; and so indeed we might, if we could not have securely relyed upon Gods Truth and Goodness, that they were designed by him to confirm the Doctrine, for the sake of which they were wrought, and we may with equal security rely upon the same Truth and Goodness for the certainty of the History of them, as we could have done for the sufficiency of them to the purpose for which they were wrought, though they had been performed in our sight, since it is as impossible to find out any deceit in the account given of them, as it would have been for us to find any in the Miracles themselves at the time of their performance.

Humane Testimony is the conveyance and the means of delivering the Truths contained in the Holy Scriptures down to us; and we, who could neither see the Miracles nor hear the Doctrines at the first hand, have at this distance of time the truth

truth of them ascertained by a continued successive Testimony, till we arrive at such as were immediate witnesses of them. Now those that saw and heard all things which are delivered to us in the Scriptures, could not esteem their senses infallible, but they notwithstanding believed our Saviour and his Disciples to be so, of whom yet their senses only could give them means of assurance that they were infallible. They knew their senses might deceive them, (or that they might be mistaken concerning the objects of sense) but nevertheless they believed that our Saviour and the Apostles could not deceive them, upon this only ground, that their senses or their reason by deduction from sense told them so. There was not one man of them perhaps but had often observed his senses misrepresent objects to him, and yet in this case upon the sole Testimony of their senses they grounded an infallible Faith: because, though their senses had misrepresented objects, yet it was in a wrong medium, at an undue distance, or by reason of some indisposition of the sense itself, and still their senses, or rather their reason by the help of their senses discovered that their senses had led them into mistakes. But in the present case, when the Object was placed in open and frequent view, to the greatest advantage, when

The Reasonableness and Certainty

when it was publick and exposed to multitudes, when all agreed in the same opinion concerning it, and when the matter was of infinite importance, here they had reason to conclude, that the God, who framed their Sences, would not suffer them to be so hurtful to them, as they must needs have been, if they had been deceived by them. In like manner, in the Testimony, which descends to us from former Ages, we see with other mens eyes, and hear with other mens ears; and though the Testimony may often fail us, and is subject to a double inconveniency, through the incapacity and unfaithfulness of witnesses, yet, as in the former case, so here, when all circumstances are weighed and considered, and after the utmost tryal, no reason can be found to withhold our assent, but all things stand undisproved, and no just scruple appears, but only a bare possibility of being deceived; and this arising not from any defect, but that of humane nature itself, here Gods Goodness and his Truth must needs interpose, to take away that only impediment, which otherwise must unavoidably hinder any thing from ever being known to be infallible.

The only certainty which we can have that our sences are true, is this, That God will not suffer them to be deceived, where
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the disposition of the medium, and distance of the Object, and all other circumstances are rightly qualified: because that would be inconsistent with his Attributes of Justice, Goodness and Truth, but it would be inconsistent with these Attributes, not upon the account of our Bodies; for they would be provided for as well, though our sences were deluded; we should see, and hear, and taste just as we do now, though we were never so much deceived in these sensations: therefore the Truth, and Goodness, and Justice of God are engaged not to suffer us to be deceived, in respect to our Souls, not in regard to our Bodies: and if we have no certainty that our sences do not deceive us, but because God would not suffer such a cheat to be put upon us, as we are intelligent and rational Beings; we have the same and much greater reason to conclude, that he would not suffer us to lye under such a delusion in reference to our eternal Interest. If God would not suffer our minds unavoidably to lye under a temporal delusion of no great consequence, have we not much more reason to conclude, that he would not suffer us unavoidably to be deceived by any means whatsoever, in reference to our eternal Interest? For in this case, to be deceived is to be destroyed, and to suffer it is a thousand times worse,

than if he should suffer all Mankind at once not only to be deceived by their senses, but to be poisoned by that deceit: and therefore the special Providence and particular care of God must be concerned to prevent it. If we have nothing to object but the imperfection of human nature, we may rely upon God that this shall never mislead us, in a matter of such consequence, whether the imperfection be in our own senses, or in the Testimony of others. In short, the Miracles related in the Scriptures will as effectually prove a divine Revelation to us, as they could to those that saw them; but the difference is, that they believed their senses and we believe them, and all things considered, we have as much reason to believe upon their evidence, as they could have to believe upon the evidence of their senses.

Let us consider History as a medium, by which these Miracles become known to us, and compare this medium with that of Sight. If a man would be sceptical, he might doubt whether any medium of Sight be so fitly disposed, as to represent objects in their due proportion, and proper shape, he might suspect that any Miracles which he could see, were false, or wrought only to amuse and deceive him, and there would be no way to satisfy such an one, but by telling him that this is inconsistent with the Truth and Goodness of God. So
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in this other medium of History, which to us supplies the want of that of Sight; a man may doubt of any matter of fact if he Pleases, notwithstanding the most credible evidence, but in a matter of this nature, where our Eternal Salvation is concerned, we may be sure, God will not suffer Mankind to be deceived without all possibility of discovering the deceit. The circumstances have all the marks of credibility in them, and therefore, if they be duly attended to, cannot but be believed, and the Doctrine which they are brought in evidence of, being propounded to be believed under pain of Damnation, require that they should be attended to, and considered: and that, which is in its circumstances most credible, and in its matter is supposed necessary to Salvation, must be certainly true, unless God could oblige us to believe a Lye. For not to believe things credible when attended to and known to be such, is to humane nature impossible, and not to attend to things proposed as from God of necessity to Salvation, is a very heinous Crime against God, and to think that God will suffer me to be deceived in what I am obliged, in Honour and obedience to him, to believe upon his Authority, is to think he can oblige me to believe a Lye. But it may be objected: if this be so, how comes it to pass that they are pronounced *blessed, who have not seen,*

and yet have believed, John xx. 29. which seems to denote, that a peculiar Blessing belongs to them, because they believe upon less evidence. I answer, that they are there pronounced Blessed, who had so well considered the nature and circumstances of things, the Prophecies concerning the Messias, and what our Saviour had delivered of himself, as to believe his Resurrection upon the report of others; not because others might not have as sufficient Grounds for their Belief, as those who saw him after his Resurrection, but the evidence of sense is more plain and convincing to the generality of men, though Reason proceeds at least upon as sure and as undeniable Principles. A demonstration, when it is rightly performed, is as certain, as the self evident Principles upon which it proceeds, though it be so far removed from them, that every one cannot discern the connexion. Demonstrations may be far from being easie and obvious, but are oftentimes, we know, very difficult and intricate, which yet, when they are once made out, are as certain as sense itself. The Blessing is pronounced to him, who believes not upon less evidence, but upon that which at first seems to be less, which is less observable, and less obvious to our consideration, but not less certain, when it is duly considered. For which
reason

reason our Saviour after he had wrought many Miracles, that were effectually attested by sufficient witnesses, required Faith in those, who came to be healed of him, because the Testimony of others was the means, which in Ages to come, was to be the motive of Faith in Christians, and he thereby signified to us, that there may be as good Grounds for Faith upon the report of others, as we could have from our own senses, and generally those who came in unbelief, went away no better satisfied. Wherefore it is said, that in his own Country because of their unbelief, he could do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick Folk and healed them, Mark vi. 5. he could not do his mighty works, because they would be ineffectual, and would be lost upon them, and he could do nothing insignificant or in vain; if they would reject what had been so fully witnessed to them, they would not believe, whatever Miracles they should see him do.

It is very remarkable, that amidst all his Miracles, our Saviour directs his Followers to *Moses* and the Prophets, and appeals to the Scriptures for the Authority of his very Miracles, and that even after his Resurrection, he instructs his Disciples, who saw and discoursed with him out of the Scriptures, to confirm them in the
truth

The Reasonableness and Certainty
 truth of it, *Luke xxiv. 26, 27.* He requires
 the Jews to give no greater credit to his
 own Miracles than that which he implies,
 they already gave to the writings of *Moses*,
 so as firmly and stedfastly to believe that he
 came from God. And we having all the
 helps and advantages which the Jews had to
 create in them a Belief of the Scriptures of
 the Old Testament, and many more and
 greater Motives (if it be possible) to believe
 these of the New, must therefore have
 sufficient means to excite in us, that Faith
 which our Saviour required of those who
 saw his Works, and heard his Doctrine;
 which certainly was a Divine Faith, and all
 the Faith, which if it be accompanied with
 sincere and impartial obedience, is required
 in order to Salvation.

Upon the whole matter I conclude,
 that the Truth of the Christian Reli-
 gion is evident even to a Demonstra-
 tion: for it is as Demonstrable that
 there is a God, as it is that I my self
 am, or that there is any thing else in
 the World; because nothing could be
 made without a Maker, or created
 without a Creator; and it is as De-
 monstrable, that this God being the
 Author of all the perfections in men,
 must himself be infinitely perfect; that
 he is infinitely Wise and Just, and Holy
 and Good, and that according to these
 Attributes

Attributes he could not suffer a false Re-
 ligion to be imposed upon the world in
 his own Name, with such manifest Tokens
 of credibility, that no man can possibly
 disprove it, but every one is obliged to
 believe it.



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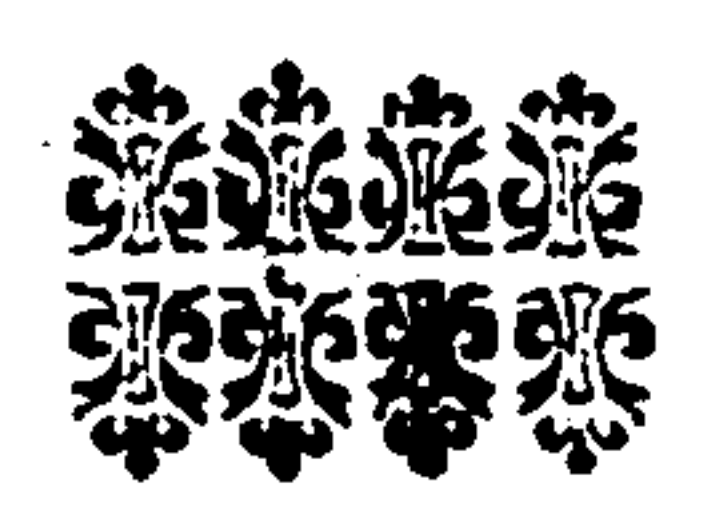
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THE
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AND
CERTAINTY
OF THE
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Chaplain to the Right Honourable the EARL
of *EXETER*, and late Fellow of *St. John's*
College in *Cambridge*.



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TO
The Right Honourable,

J O H N
EARL of EXETER.

May it Please Your LORDSHIP,

TH E *general Decay and Contempt of the Christian Religion amongst us, has made me think, that I could not better employ the Leisure, which, by Your Lordship's favour, I enjoy, than in using my best Endeavours to shew the Excellency and the Certainty of it. And what I have done, is here humbly presented to your Lordship, as of Right, and upon many Accounts, it ought to be.*

THE EPISTLE

The Honour and the Satisfaction which I have often had to hear Your Lordship speak in the behalf of Religion and Vertue, encourage me to hope, that a Performance, though but such as this, upon that Subject, may obtain your Acceptance. And the Name only of a Person of your Lordship's Honour, and Learning, and Knowledge of the World, may perhaps be of more advantage to the Cause I undertake, than any thing I have been able to write.

Religion may seem, by Descent, and as it were, by Inheritance, to belong to Your Lordship's Care: The Wisdom and Piety of Your Great Ancestor appear, to distant Ages in the Reformation, which, through the Blessing of God, was in so great a measure, by His means, establish'd in this Kingdom. And I have with joy often thought, that I could observe the Spirit and Genius of my Lord Treasurer BURGHELY now exerting it self more than ever in your Noble Family. From whence, methinks, we may presage Happiness

DEDICATORY.

pitie to the Nation, and may yet expect to see a true sense of Religion revive, and may hope, that even in our days, Christianity, amongst English-men, shall be more than a Name, which is every where spoken against.

An eminent Vertue is a Publick Good: There is a powerful and commanding Force in Great Examples, to countenance Vertue, and discourage Vice and Profaneness, to make Irreligion appear, as it is, base and contemptible in the World; to degrade it, and thrust it down among the lower and untaught part of Mankind. Much is not to be expected from the Schools and from the Gown, under such Contempt and Discouragement. But the Great and the Honourable have it in their power to do great things; things worthy of Themselves, and for the advancement of God's Glory. Persons of High Birth, and both by Nature and Education fitted for the Highest Undertakings, whose Vertues shall flourish with their Years, and add New Lustre to their Hereditary Honours,

THE EPISTLE

nents, may yet regain a due esteem to Religion, and adorn the Gospel of Christ. This is a proper Object for the Ambition of generous aspiring Minds to express their Gratitude to Him who has placed them so much above the rest of the World; and when they find themselves happy now, to disdain to aim at any thing less than Everlasting Happiness hereafter. To be Miserable after Happiness, is an aggravation of Misery: but to receive Eternal Blessings, as the Fruits and Improvement of such as are Temporal, is the Privilege of those whom God has been pleased to distinguish from others by his Mercies, and who distinguish themselves by a regard to his Honour and Service.

All that know Burghley, (and who is there almost that doth not know it?) are surpris'd with wonder and delight, to observe what Art can do, and to behold the Splendour and the Magnificence of foreign Countries in our own: But the Glories and Rewards of Vertue shall continue, when Burghley it self and the World

DEDICATORY.

World shall be no more; and will make Death but a Passage and an Advancement from one Palace, from one Honour to another; and a Removal only from the uncertain Riches and imperfect Felicities of this Life, to the Mansions of Eternal Bliss in Heaven.

That these my Endeavours may prove but in any measure serviceable to the Ends of Religion and Vertue, and thereby to the Glory and Happiness of your Honourable Family, in this and a better World, is, My LORD, the unfeigned Desire and Prayer of,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Most Humble, and

Most Obedient

Servant and Chaplain,

R. JENKIN.

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THE
PREFACE.

I Am sensible, that the Publication of a Treatise of this nature, will be liable to Exceptions, from those for whose Use and Benefit it is chiefly design'd, who will be ready to lay hold of all Pretences, to avoid the being convinced of what they have so little mind to believe. They will be apt to say, That if the Truth of Religion be so certain, and so evident, as it is maintained to be, there could be little need of so many Discourses upon this Argument; for it is no sign of Certainty, when such a number of Books are publish'd of this kind, that so many Men of Learning and Parts have written upon the Subject, yet others, it seems,

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are not satisfied in their Performances, but are continually offering something New upon it. They will likewise object, That many of the Professors and Ministers of Religion, do not live as if they believed themselves, at least, not as if they were so very certain of what they teach; and that if there were so great Certainty, there never could be so many Unbelievers, but all who had heard of it, must needs be convinced by such Evidence. I shall therefore shew here, That the Number of Books written on this Subject, doth not prove the Uncertainty of Religion, but rather the contrary; and that the ill Lives of Men, is no argument against the Religion they profess: And then I shall enquire how it comes to pass, that a Religion which carries so plain and convincing Evidence along with it, should yet by too many be disbelieved, or disregarded.

I. To the First thing, it might be sufficient to say, That the Number of
Wri-

Writers, is a great Confirmation of the Truth of our Religion; since as many as have undertaken the Proof of it, have always agreed in the main Evidence, and differ only in Method, or in the Management of particular Arguments: and though all have not written with equal strength and clearness; yet there is not, I believe, one Author, but has brought sufficient Arguments to confute the Adversaries of Religion. They are pleased, indeed, to think otherwise: but they may at least take notice, how obvious it is, that if this Objection prove any thing, it must prove, that there is no such thing as *Certainty* in the World; because there is no Art nor Science, concerning which divers Treatises are not daily published. But are therefore the Natures of Vertue and Vice uncertain? Is it the less certain, whether Justice, Temperance, and common Honesty, be Vertues; or whether Murther, Adultery, and Theft, be Crimes; be-
cause

cause Laws are made, and Sermons daily preached concerning these things? or can any Man doubt, that these Crimes often meet with severe Punishments even in this World, though Man will take no warning by never so many Examples, but have need of continual Advice and Exhortation to keep them from the commission of them? Is there the less Certainty in the Mathematicks, because *Euclid*, *Apollonius*, and innumerable others, of all Ages and Nations, have put forth Books and Systems of Mathematicks in several Forms and Methods.

When many write upon the same Subject, it is an argument of the Excellency and Usefulness of it; nor that they are dissatisfied in what has been already said by others, but that they think more may be said, or that some things may be proved more clearly, in another method, with more advantage to some Capacities, and with greater probability of removing the Scruples
of

of some Men. It is, undoubtedly, very fit, that all necessary Doctrines, upon which the Eternal Happiness or Misery of Mankind depends, should be treated of in all kinds of Ways and Methods; and they cannot be too often discoursed of, nor by too many Men, that no Objection may remain unanswered, nor Scruple unobserved. Though a *little* may be sufficient, upon a plain Matter, to wise Men; yet too much cannot be said upon a Subject wherein all Men are concerned: And it is the great Assurance of the Truth of Religion, and Charity to the Souls of Men, that has engaged so many Authors in this Cause.

Besides the Primitive Fathers and Apologists, Men of the greatest Learning and Abilities, in latter Ages, have undertaken this Subject, having made it their Study and Business to consider the Grounds of our Holy Religion. And I think few will pretend to more Judgment to discover Truth, or to

more Integrity to declare it, than such Authors who have had no particular Interest or Profession in reference to Religion, but were under only the common Obligations of all Christians; which if they had valued as little as some others, they could with as much Wit and Learning have appeared in the Cause of Irreligion, as any that ever undertook it. Many of the most eminent in all Professions and Callings have been the most zealous Assertors of Religion; as I might shew by particular Examples which are in every Man's memory. Indeed, I believe, few Men have so vain an Opinion of themselves, as to think they understand their several Studies and Professions better than such Persons who have given undoubted evidence of their unfeigned Belief of the Christian Religion. Men of the greatest Sagacity and Judgment have not been moved with such Objections as others so much stumble at; but have lived and died
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the Glory of their Age, and an Honour to their Religion; such were the Learned Prince of *Mirandula*, and that Learned French Nobleman *Mornans*; such were *Grotius*, Sir *Matthew Hales*, Dr. *Willis*; and many besides, both of our own and other Nations. I shall mention but one more, who indeed was so eminent, that I scarce need mention him, for he must be already in every Reader's thoughts; I mean, the Honourable Mr. *Boyle*, who was as inquisitive, and as unwilling to be imposed upon, and knew as much of Nature, perhaps, as ever any Man, not Inspired, did; and had withal as steadfast a Belief, and as awful Apprehensions of Revealed Religion; which he endeavoured to establish and propagate, not only by his own Writings, but by the Labours of others, which he engaged and rewarded by his Last Will and Testament.

2. But Men do not always live answerably to what they profess to believe.

lieve. It were heartily to be wished, that there had never been any occasion given for this Objection: For though it be very inconsiderable in it self, yet it does, I believe, the most mischief of any; because Men naturally govern themselves more by the Example than by the Judgment of others, or even than by their own Reason. But if we will judge aright, the Example of one Man, who lives according to the Doctrines of Religion, ought to be of more weight with us, than the Example of never so many, who live contrary to their Profession. Because, when Men profess one thing, and act another, their Actions are surely as little to be regarded as their Profession: And if we will not believe their Profession against their Actions, why should we regard their Example against their avowed Principles and Profession? It is in all other cases esteemed a good Argument for the Truth of any thing, when Men confess

self it against themselves. And the Motives and Temptations are visible, by which they are led aside from their own declared Faith and Judgment; this Pleasure, or that Profit, is the cause of it, which every Man can point to. But when he, who lives conformably to his Principles, denies himself, when he loses and suffers by it, he must needs be in great earnest; whereas the others are apparently bribed, to forsake that in Practice, which, notwithstanding, they cannot but own in the Theory and Principles.

This was an old Prejudice against Philosophy, That the Philosophers did not observe their own Precepts. But it was rejected by wise Men, as no Argument against the Truth and Usefulness of Philosophy. It is a great Objection against the Men, but sure it can be no Argument against the Things themselves, that they are disregarded by those who understand their worth, and pretend to have a due value

value and esteem for them. And whoever renounces the Faith, or takes up Principles of Irreligion, because of any ill Practices of others, too plainly declares either that in Truth and sincerity he never had any, or that he is very willing to part with his Religion. All Men make some pretence to Reason; and those Men most of all, who are so apt to decry Religion upon this account, That many who profess to believe it, do not always live up to its Rules and Instructions: But they do not consider, in the mean time, That Men generally act as much against Reason as against Religion; and that therefore this Objection, if it can signify any thing, must banish all Reason and good Sense out of the World. If there be no True Religion, because so few practise it as they ought; there can be no True Reason neither, because the Lives of so many Men contradict it. And some, perhaps, would be contented, that there should be no True
Reli-

Religion, rather than that there should be no True Reason; because then they must be no longer allowed to be able to Reason against Religion.

But if the Truth and Reality of Things depend upon the Practice of Men, then the same Religion may be true and false at the same time; it may be true in one Age, and false in another; or true in one Countrey, and false in the next; and must be more or less true or false, in the same proportion, as the Lives and Manners of its Professors are more or less vertuous or vicious. Indeed, this is so unreasonable and unjust a Prejudice against Religion, though it be grown a very common one, that methinks every Man should be ashamed of it; especially Men of Reason, who scorn so much, in all other cases, to depend upon the Practice and Authority of others. And it is hard to believe, that Men who think at all, can think as they speak, when they make use of this Objection.
Will

Will any Man suppose, that Temperance doth not preserve Health, tho' he should see his Physician run into excess? or, that Poyson will not kill, tho' the Man who tells him so, and advises him against it, be so desperate as to take it himself?

But as absurd as this Objection is in it self, it is most of all absurd, when it is urged against the Christian Religion; of which we are assured, that one of the Twelve who first preached it, was an Apostate, and a Traytor: and our Saviour declares, that many who had Preached and wrought Miracles in his Name, should be at last rejected by him, *Matth. vii. 21.* And therefore, for any to make this cavil against Christianity, is only to shew, that they do not consider it, or will not remember the plainest and most remarkable Points of it.

3. The causes of Unbelief amongst Christians, notwithstanding the clearest Evidence for their Religion, are too many

many to be here recounted: But I shall mention some of the chief of them.

(1.) Vicious Men are very unwilling to believe that Religion to be True, which is so directly contrary to their whole course of Life, and to all their Inclinations and Desires, but they are very ready to catch at any Cavils and Pretences against it. The Lives of too many Christians have brought a Scandal, though a very unjust one, upon the Religion which they profess: and Men who find themselves more inclined to do as they see them do, than as they hear them acknowledge they ought to do, make no sufficient enquiry into the Principles of Religion.

(2.) Divers men have had a strange Ambition to say something new upon every Subject they treat of; and in order to that, have set themselves, with all their Skill and Power, to contradict and overthrow what has been said by others, that they might make way for their own Opinions; or so to refine upon

upon the Notions of others, that that might appear New, and of their own Invention : which has made inconsiderate men conclude, that we are always to seek in our Doctrine, and have no fix'd Principles : whereas men of Learning and Judgment know, that commonly what is with so much ostentation proposed and recommended to us for New, has been considered and rejected of old, though not, perhaps, in the very Terms, yet in the Sence and Substance of it ; or else it is some True Doctrine under a different Form and Manner of Expression.

The Improvements which have been made in Philosophy, this last Age, afford a real and great advantage towards the Proof and Establishment of Religion in Mens Minds ; and yet there are few things which have been more abused to the dishonour of it. For when men find it convenient to give some vent to the Philosophical Humour,

mour, they bethink themselves of a fit Subject for it to discharge it self upon ; and this must be something Great, and something that is very New and Surprising : and there is nothing which answers all these Qualities so well as a new Account of the Origin of the Universe, and then the History of the Creation in *Genesis*, as well as the World it self, must undergo all the Alterations which they are pleased to impose upon it, that it may perfectly submit and comply with their New Hypothesis. If this Fancy should hold, New Systems of the World will be as common as new Romances : They must pardon me the Expression ; for *Des Cartes* himself, among his Friends, gave no better Name to his System ; which was the first ground and occasion to all the rest. And nothing is more easie with a Philosophical Wit, than to build or destroy a World : but it is to be hoped, when they have wearied themselves

selves with New Contrivances, they will let us have our Old World again. In the mean time, these Men, who have too much Philosophy to have no Religion, put dangerous Weapons into the Hands of those who have neither the one nor the other, and know not how to use them but to do mischief. And there is nothing so plain, but it may be rendred difficult and obscure to many Men, by long and subtile Disputes. If great numbers of Men should write concerning the Sun's Heat and Light, and Motion for many Years, and every one should still contradict all that went before him, and strive to say something New and Strange upon the Subject; the last, for ought I know, might pretend to prove, that perhaps there may be no Sun at all: Which, indeed, is no more than what the Scepticks have said. And this Infidelity and Scepticism concerning God, and his Providence, and Revelation, must end
in

in the Scepticism of our very Senses, if these Principles be pursued in their direct and unavoidable Consequences.

Others have been too bold with the Mysteries of Religion, and have pretended to explain them so far, as if they would endeavour to present us with a Religion without all Mystery, which at the same time has exposed Themselves to Reproach, and Religion to the Scorn of such as are glad to take all occasions to shew their Goodwill to it. The evident and declared Design of the *Socinians*, is, to retain no Mysteries, but by forced Interpretations of Scripture to expound them all to their own, that is, to a new and absurd sense; and it is but too plain, that there is a combined Design carried on between Them and the Deists, who are contented to pass for Christians, with a Distinction, and without a Mystery: *Anti-Trinitarian* is a milder word than *Anti-Christian*, and *Unitarian* is but a different Name for *Deist*.

Another sort have been very laborious in finding out Mysteries, where there are none ; and under a pretence of reducing the plainest Doctrines to clear Principles, have only amused and confounded Men in the true and obvious Notions of them. Thus the Duties of Love to God, and to our Neighbour, are plain in themselves, and are as plainly set down in the Scriptures : And to raise abstracted and Metaphysical Speculations upon so plain Texts, is only to tell us what we know before, in other and less intelligible Terms, or else to fall into the nice and rash Disputes of the School-men, or into the Enthusiastick Heats of the Mystical Divines ; which can have no tendency to the Peace or Edification of the Church, but gives an occasion to the Adversary to Blasphe-
peme.

(3.) A Third cause of Infidelity, has been the Rashness of some Criticks. For if any thing relating to Religion
has

has been once called in question, by Men who have got themselves a Name, by writing more boldly than wiser Men have done, the Authority of such Men shall be thought a sufficient Answer to all the Arguments which can be taken from any thing which they are pleased to dislike. Criticism, when it falls to the share of a prudent Man, is, without doubt, a necessary and most valuable part of Learning : But it must be confess'd, that there is hardly any thing more impertinent than an impertinent Critick. It is a great thing, if it be well considered, to set the Bounds, and fix the Territories of Learning, to adjudge to every Author his own Works, and say, that this Book, or perhaps some small part of a Book, shall be his, and the other he shall have nothing to do withal. This is no trivial matter, nor of small consequence, and ought not to be at the pleasure of any one who has a mind to be taken notice of,

for contradicting the received Opinion, and being more confident than others. And the less Occasion there is for these Criticks, the more Danger there is from them, for if there be no work for them, they will be apt to make themselves work: And what Author will be able to stand before Men, whose business and ambition it is to find fault? But though the Jurisdiction of Criticks be very large and absolute; yet I have taken care not to come under it, but have purposely avoided insisting upon any Authorities which have fallen under their Disputes, unless it be, perhaps, in speaking of the *Sibyls*; but there I have the consent of the best Criticks, besides evident Reason, on my side, so far as I am concerned for them.

(4.) A Pretence to Miracles and Prophecies, without Reason or Ground for it, in behalf of some particular Errors, has weakened the Belief of the True Miracles and Prophecies: and
whilst

whilst laborious Endeavours have been used to shew, that the Christian Religion cannot be true, unless those Doctrines be true, which have no foundation in it; the quite contrary has happened to what in charity we must suppose these Authors designed: for instead of owning their Religion to be true; Men, who are convinced of the weakness of their Pretences, have taken them at their word, and have been forward to grant them, that there is no Religion true, and therefore not theirs.

(5.) I shall shew at large, in due time, That the many Differences and Disputes in Religion, are no prejudice to the Truth and Certainty of it; but they are, notwithstanding, a great scandal and temptation, and a great hindrance to the Salvation of Men, especially as they are commonly managed; whilst by all imaginable Arts and Means, Men of different Parties and Opinions strive to run down their

Adversaries. Those who are concerned, would do well, I should think, to consider what mischief may ensue, through the imprudent and unchristian management of Disputes, even in a right Cause; which has no need of such methods; and therefore they are the less excusable, who use them in defence of such a Cause. If we would convince or persuade Men in any other thing, we never are wont to think it a proper expedient to use them ill, and give them hard words: And is rough Usage proper only for the propagation of the Doctrines of the Gospel, and of a Religion of Peace, and Meekness, and Charity?

I know what Examples may be produced to countenance this Practice; but those great Authors have Excellencies enough for our imitation, we need not imitate their Faults. Our Blessed Saviour, indeed, himself, and his Apostles, did not always forbear severe language; but then they spoke
with

with a Divine Power and Authority, and knew how to speak to the Hearts, as well as to the Ears of Men, and fully perceived when this was the last and only Remedy to be used; they could strike dead with their Words, and were infallible in the use of such Expressions as were proper for the present occasion, either to comfort or to terrify Sinners, and awaken them to Repentance. There is no doubt, but a seasonable Reproof or Rebuke, though it be very severe, may be not only consistent with Charity, but may also be the Effect of it; and if ever we may speak with the Power and Authority, as well as in *the meekness and gentleness of Christ*, we must do it when the Truth of the Christian Religion is called in question, and that by Christians. We live in an Age in which Men think they have done a great thing, and enough for them to value themselves upon, if they can but start a bold Objection against the

Scriptures, though it have never so little sence in it. We have sufficient warrant to treat these Men as they deserve: for the Apostles were commanded (according to a Custom in use amongst the *Jews*) to *shake off the dust off their feet*, against such as rejected their Doctrine: and the least we can say to them, is to let them know, that if they will not believe, we are sorry for it, but cannot help it, and that they will have the worst of it. Mr. *Hobbs* himself will allow, that an Atheist ought to be banish'd as a Publick Mischief, and scarce any Terms can be too severe for those who openly apostatize from the Religion in which they have been baptized, and blaspheme that Holy Name by which they are called. We must not so debase the Gospel of Christ, as to seem to beg their Approbation, which, I'm sure, we have little need of, in the present case. I am far from thinking any thing small or inconsiderable, in
which

which the Honour of God, and the Truth of Religion is concerned; but certainly a great distinction is to be made between them from whom we differ in particular Points, though of great moment and consequence, and those who reject the Whole. Our chief Zeal and Strength should be employed against the Common Enemies, who delight in our Quarrels, and sport themselves with mutual Wounds we so freely give one another.

(6.) We have a sort of Men amongst us, who from hence have taken occasion to make it their whole Business, both by their Discourses and Writings, to laugh all Religion and Morality out of the World: which has made our very Wit to degenerate, though this be the only thing for which these Men seem to value themselves; and our Poems, with all their soft Numbers, and flowing Style, to be far from deserving Commendation: for this way of Writing is as much
against

against the Rules of Poetry, as against those of Vertue ; and they can never answer it to their own Art, whatever they may do to their Consciences ; but ought to be censured for being ill Poets, as well as ill Men. A fine Saying, a soft or bold Expression, or a pretty Character ! is this all we have in exchange for our Reason and Religion, which these Men have so laboriously decryed ! Some of the best Poets of our Age have been so sensible of the Dishonour hereby done to God, the Disservice to Mankind, and the Disgrace to so Noble an Art, that they have employ'd their Genius a better way. But the extravagant Raillery against Religion has been the more licentious, and the more frequent, not only because it has met with Applause from so many, who are none of the wisest part of Mankind, but because it is the easiest way of Wit, flowing so naturally from the very Temper and Inclination of corrupted

rupted Minds ; and any smart Reflection may easily be taken from another Subject, and applied here with advantage, because it looks more extravagant and daring, and surpriseth for no other reason, but for the bold irreverent use of it. What is there in Religion, if it were untrue, that can seem ridiculous ? What, in the awful Majesty of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, that can provoke the Laughter and Mockery of any but Fools and Mad-men ? It is not obvious to conceive, why it should be thought a greater argument of a Man's Parts, to revile his God, than his Prince ; to speak Blasphemy, than it is to speak Treason ; or why the Wit should atone for the Crime more in the one case than in the other. But the truth is, a very moderate share of that will serve the turn in both cases. *Produce your cause, saith the Lord ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the God of Jacob.*

(7.) And

(7.) And indeed, from the Wit and Drollery of some, others have taken the confidence to proceed to Arguments, but they are very far from being either strong or plausible; for I never in my life observed so much Disingenuity, so vain an affectation of Learning, and so groundless a pretence to Reason, as in these Men. The Extravagancies of *Cardan* are known to all that ever heard of him: The Lust, and Pride, and base Flattery of *Vaninus*, is every where visible. *Aut Deus est, aut Vaninus*, is such an expression, as no Man besides ever used in a Dialogue of himself. And Mr. *Hobbs's* love of Singularity, and Spirit of Contradiction, is evident from his own Confession; and my late Lord *Clarendon*, who knew him well, has acquainted the World both with the Temper and Design of the Man, and with the Errors of his Writings. But I shall come down lower, and examine a little the Arguments

guments of later Writers, who would take it ill, if it should be thought that they have not retained and improved all the profound Reasonings of their Predecessors in Irreligion, which we may expect to find abridged in a Book bearing the Title of *The Oracles of Reason*, a Rhapsody of Letters, and some small Tracts of divers Men.

But here I need not much concern my self with what is taken out of the Authors of *Religio Medici*, and of the *Archæologia Philosophicæ*; because these Authors, notwithstanding those Objections, profess an unfeigned Belief of Revealed Religion, in these very Books, though the Transcriber did not think fit to acquaint his Reader with such Professions, for fear of bringing an Antidote with his Poyson: But since those Objections were so far from having that effect upon the Authors themselves, all that they can serve for, is to shew, that they can make a Deist of none but a weak or an ill Man.

I re-

I refer the Reader to the Preface of *Religio Medici*, to see how disingenuous it is to quote any thing from that Book, as the fix'd and mature Thoughts of Sir *Thomas Brown*. But as if this had not been Disingenuity enough, we have him brought in, saying the quite contrary to what we find in his Book. (a) *How all the Kinds of Creatures, (says Sir Thomas) not only in their own Bulks, but with a competency of Food and Sustenance, might be preserv'd in one Ark, and within the extent of Three hundred Cubits, to a Reason that rightly examines it, will appear very feasible.* Thus it is both in the Book it self, and in the Annotations upon it; but our (b) Transcriber has made the Author say quite contrary, that *this will not appear very feasible.* What is transcribed likewise from the same Author's Book (c) of *Vulgar Errors*, is not fairly cited, and no notice is taken, that this learned Author has a whole Chapter,

(a) *Relig. Med. par. 1. S. 22.*

(b) *Oracles of Reason, P. 5.*

(c) *Ibid. P. 9.*

ter, in that very Work, concerning (d) the Temptation of *Eve* by the *Serpent*; where that is cleared, which was (e) before brought only as an Objection, and transcribed by Mr. *Blount*. How the Translator has dealt with the Author of *Archæologia Philosophicæ*, I have not his Book by me to examine, he is living to vindicate himself. One thing I have observed, that Mr. *Blount* assures us, that (f) *this learned Author doth a strenuously affirm, as 'tis possible, that the World had a Beginning about Six thousand Years since; whereas the Translation which this Gentleman sends Mr. Gildon with his Letter, says, (g) That to prescribe the Divine Creation so short an Epochæ as the limits of Six thousand Years, 'tis what he never durst.* Now, either Mr. *Blount* or the Translator are mistaken in their Author, and I rather think the latter must mistake him. For whenever the World had been created, there must have been a time when it had existed but

(d) *Vulg. Errors, l. 5. c. 4.*

(e) *Ibid. l. 1. c. 1.*

(f) *Oracles of Reason, p. 3.*

(g) *Ibid. P. 73.*

but Six thousand Years ; and then the shortness of the *Epocha* might have been objected, as well as now. So that there was no possibility of preventing this Objection, unless the World could have been Eternal ; which was likewise impossible, from the Nature of Time, which being successive, necessarily implies a Beginning ; and as this Author, by his Translator, speaks in that place, *we cannot form to our selves any Idea of a thing created from Eternity.* But what is cited out of either of these Authors, will fall under some of the Heads which are to be treated of in another Book which I design upon this Subject ; I shall therefore here only single out such Particulars as are the proper Notions and Conceits of our Deists, and of which I had no thought or occasion to speak elsewhere.

(6) *Ibid.*
p. 160.

Mr. *Blount* (*b*) will have the Prophecy of *Jacob*, concerning the *Scepter's* not being to depart from *Judab*, till
the

the Coming of Shiloh, to have been first applied to the *Messiah* by the *Cabbalists* in the time of the *Maccabees*, and not to have been expounded of *David's Line*, till the *Reign of Herod*, at least not generally ; for here he is not so positive, as a Man might have been in a thing purely of his own Invention. But doth he bring any Proof or Probability for what he says ? No, it is meer Conjecture, contrary to all the most ancient Expositions of the Jewish Writers. But the *Jews* had a *Cabbala*, and the *Pharisees* hated *Herod*, and the *Herodians* flattered him, and *Josephus* flattered *Vespasian* ; and therefore from some Circumstances superficially framed and put together, he will needs gather the Uncertainty of this Prophecy, and conclude, that it is contradicted by others, without any consideration had to what so many have said to reconcile them. In the same place, he says, that the *Jews* reckon the Book of
c *Daniel*

Daniel among their Hagiographa or Sacred, but not Canonical Books. Father Simon, to whose Writings I suppose this Gentleman was no Stranger, might undeceive him in this matter; his words are these, (i) *Novi quidem Judæos de germanâ vocis illius (Cetuvim) significatione inter se non convenire; etsi omnes sentiant Cetuvim, seu Hagiographos non minùs divinos esse & canonicos, quàm reliquos veteris instrumenti libros:* and he plainly proves his Assertion.

(i) *Castigat. ad O-
puse. Isaacii
Vossii.
P. 258.*

(k) *Oracul.
of Reason,
P. 221.*

The same Gentleman (k) tells us, that *Josephus* confesses, That he durst not presume to compare the Nation of the Jews with the Antiquity of the most ancient and infallible Writings of the *Ægyptians, Chaldeans and Phœnicians.* For which he refers his Reader to *Josephus contra Apion. lib. 1.* Where he will find the quite contrary; for *Josephus* makes it his business to confute the Heathen Historians, and to vindicate the Jewish Antiquities against them,

them, and to shew how they contradict themselves and one another, in what they relate of the Jews, different from the Scriptures. (l) And yet this notorious Mistake is again repeated by our Author; which any one may confute, that will but look into *Josephus.* The Design of his First Book against *Apion*, is, to prove the Truth of the Jewish Antiquities against the Greeks, from the Writings of the *Ægyptians, Phœnicians and Chaldeans.* *Josephus* says, He wonders at those, who think that the Greeks alone ought to be regarded in Matters of Antiquity; whereas there was nothing to be found among them of Ancient Date: their Cities, their Arts, their Laws, were but of late Original, and their Histories later than all these. But the Greeks themselves confess, that there were very ancient Accounts of former Times among the *Ægyptians, the Chaldeans,* and the *Phœnicians;* (m) For I omit, says he, for the present, to put our own

(l) *Anima
Mundi,
P. 25.*

(m) *Ἐγὼ
δὲ οὐκ ἴ-
κασὶς ἐπι-
νοῖς συγ-
τάξω.*

Nation into the number with them. This is far enough from saying, that he durst not presume to enter into a Comparison ; for he doth shew soon after, that the *Jews* had taken as much care in the writing and preserving their Antiquities, as these Nations, or any other, could possibly do. But it had not been to his purpose to mention the *Jews* in that place with the rest ; because he brings his Argument from the confession of Foreign Historians, who were acknowledged by the *Greeks* to be of much greater Authority in things of this nature, than they could pretend to themselves.

(n) *Crackl. of Reason,*
p. 213.

(n) A little before, having translated something out of *Ocellus Lucanus*, to prove the World Eternal, this Gentleman thus subjoins, *Now it is very much, that this Author, Ocellus Lucanus, (who, for his Antiquity, is held to be almost Contemporary with Moses, (if not before him) should have so different a sentiment of the World's Beginning from that,*

that, which Moses had : methinks, if Moses his History of the Creation, and of Adam's being the First Man, had been a general received Opinion at that time ; *Ocellus Lucanus*, who was so ancient and so eminent a Philosopher, should not have been altogether ignorant thereof. But what shall we say, if *Ocellus Lucanus* was not so ancient, but of no Antiquity in comparison of *Moses* ? then, methinks, this Author might have spared his Pains and his Inferences. And of what Antiquity *Ocellus Lucanus* was, is shewn by *Ludovicus Nogarola*, who translated this Piece of *Ocellus Lucanus* into Latin, and publish'd it with his own Observations upon it. For he makes it appear, from *Plato*, that the Ancestors of this *Ocellus* being banish'd from *Troy*, under *Laomedon*, came to *Myra*, a City in *Lycia* ; but *Laomedon* was the Father of *Priamus*, in whose time, as every body knows, happen'd the Destruction of *Troy* ; and *Fair* was then

then Judge of *Israel*, about Three hundred Years after they had been in possession of the *promised Land*. He farther shews, from *Lucian*, that *Ocellus Lucanus* was a Scholar of *Pythagoras*; who lived, sure, long enough after *Moses*, to save our Author's Criticism, or to expose it. Indeed, the best Account we have in Heathen Antiquity, agrees exactly with the History of *Moses*, concerning the Creation of the World. *Aristotle* (o) himself was not satisfied in his own Doctrine of the Eternity of the World, and he (p) confesses, that all the Philosophers asserted the Creation of it: and as for the manner of the Creation, (q) he says, it was esteemed a very ancient Doctrine, and thought, by some, to be the Doctrine of the most ancient Theologits, That it was formed out of Water. It is certain, that (r) *Thales*, the first Greek Philosopher who treated of these things, one of the Seven Wise Men of *Greece*, and the Wisest of them,

(o) *Grot. de Verit. Annot. ad c. 7. l. 1.*

(p) *Aristot. de Caelo, l. 1. c. 10.*

(q) *Meta-phys. l. 1. c. 3.*

(r) *Tull. de Nat. Deor. l. 1. De Legib. l. 2.*

them, in *Tully's* judgment, taught, That God formed all things out of Water.

The same Gentleman has observ'd, (s) That the *Epicurean Deists* labour to have their Vices imputed rather to a Superiority of their Reason above that of others, than to a Servitude of their Reason to their own Passions; which shews, Vice is naturally esteemed a base and low thing, It is but too plain, that this was his own case, as his unhappy Death declared.

This, I think, is sufficient to shew, how little this Book deserves the vain Title of *The Oracles of Reason*: it will be hard to meet with any Book, which has less right to so high a Pretence. I shall take notice but of one thing more, and that is, (t) *Mr. Gildon's* Attempt to prove the Materiality of the Soul; his Arguments are as unlikely to prove it, as most I have seen: but I shall shew the Notion to be absurd in it self, and impossible to be maintained.

(s) *Oracles of Reason, p. 93.*

(t) *Ibid. p. 137.*

The Essence of all Matter must be the same, whether Extension, or any thing else, be assign'd as the Essence of it ; and though we may be ignorant of the Essence of Matter, yet we know it cannot be essential to it to Think : for then all Matter would necessarily Think. But the difference in the several sorts of Matter can be only in Accidents, that is, in Bulk, Rest, Motion, Situation, and Figure, none of which can render Matter capable of Thought. For if a different *Bulk* of Matter could produce Thought in it, and the Subtile Matter should be able to Think and Reason, though the Gross cannot ; then the Parts of a Stone would think, when it is ground to Dust ; though when they are joined and compacted together, they make up a Body, as unlikely to think, as any thing we can imagine. If *Rest* could cause Matter to think, a Stone would be the most thinking Creature in the World. If *Motion* could

could cause it, then that which moves with most quickness, would think most, as Fire, and the Sun, and Stars : but Motion is only a successive change of Place, and there is no reason why Matter should think in one place, rather than in another ; or why it should think, when it is moved in a Right Line, or in a Circle, or in any Curve Line, rather than when it lies still. Again, There is no reason why Matter should be able to think, or not think, according to its *Situation* or *Position* ; why it should think in the Brain, rather than upon the Trencher ; or when it is digested, and reduced to Animal Spirits, rather than when it is in a more compacted Substance, and has a different relation to the parts of Matter about it. Lastly, If any sort of *Figure* could produce Thought, Stones must certainly think, as well as the best of us ; and so, indeed, might any thing else : for what Body is there that may not

not subsist under all varieties of Figure ?

Neither can any lucky conjuncture of all these together produce a Power and Faculty of Thinking. For, imagine what Bulk, Rest or Motion, Situation and Figure you can, to meet together, they are all alike incapable of so much as one Thought ; since there is nothing in the Nature of any of these Accidents or Modifications of Matter, but it is as far from any Power of Thinking, as Matter it self is ; and therefore Thinking can no more arise from a combination of them together, than it can proceed from the amassing together of Matter. All the Accidents, but Motion, have nothing Active or Operative in them, but are only Matter under different Modes and Relations. And Motion, whatever the Figure, or Bulk and Contexture of any Body may be, can be but Motion still : and suppose what Contexture or Modifications you will ;
what

what is Motion, under all Determinations, Collisions and Combinations, but change of Place ? and, how can change of Place produce Thinking, under any variety of Contexture in the Particles of Matter ? Free-will is impossible to be accounted for by Matter and Motion, as *Epicurus* found, who was therefore forced to have recourse to his *Declinationes Atomorum* ; for which he is so justly exposed by *Tully*. For neither can Matter determine its own Motion, nor can Motion determine it self, but must be determined by something External ; whereas all men find it in their power to determine themselves by an Inward and voluntary Principle.

It is true, indeed, that the Soul, in its Operations, depends very much upon the Temperament of the Body : yet the Soul, even in this state, has Thoughts, which have no Relation to the Body, or any Material Thing ; as Thoughts of God and Spirits, its
own

own Reflex Thoughts, or Consciousness of its own Operations. And if it were now capable of no Thoughts, but such as have some dependance upon the Body ; yet this can never prove, that the Soul it self is Material, or that Matter Thinks. A Man writes with his Pen, and cannot write without one ; Is it therefore his Pen properly that writes, and not the Man ? The Body is the Instrument of the Soul, in its Operations here ; and as the Instrument is fit or unfit, so must its Operations be more or less perfect.

But it is strange, that the chief part of us should be of such a Nature, that we can form no *Idea* of it. We may form an *Idea* of it, though but an imperfect one : And do we not know, that the Eye, the noblest part of the Body, cannot see it self, but imperfectly, and by Reflexion ? And let any Man try, whether he can form a better *Idea* of a Material Soul, than
of

of an Immaterial one. But this Writer, by *Idea*, seems to mean a Material *Idea*, or Imagination : and we cannot, indeed, form a Material *Idea* of an Immaterial Spirit. Yet, after all which he, or any Man else, has said, the Nature of the Soul is as clearly understood, as that of the Body : and there is nothing encumbered with greater Difficulties than Extension, if that be the Essence of Matter ; and if that be not, it is as hard still to know what the Essence of Matter is. The Instance which he brings of *Brutes*, is easily answered, Whether they can think, or not. If they cannot, the Objection falls of it self : If they can, I should rather suppose, that their Souls may be annihilated, or may transmigrate and pass from one Brute to another, than that the Souls of Men must be Material, that the Souls of Brutes may be Material too.

THE
REASONABLENESS
AND
CERTAINTY
OF THE
Christian Religion.

BOOK II.

Containing, Discourses upon such Subjects as are thought most liable to Objections.

By *Robert Jenkin*, Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl of *Exeter*, and late Fellow of *St. John's College* in *Cambridge*.

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THE
PREFACE.

THERE never appeared, I believe, among Christians so general a Disaffection as in the present Age, to the Christian Religion, in Men pretending at least to Reason and Learning, and Natural Religion, and Moral Vertue. And tho' I could have little Encouragement to hope, that I should write any thing which might much prevail with Men of these Accomplishments; yet I was persuaded that so good a Cause, tho' but in weak Hands, could not fail of some Effect upon all that would be at the pains to consider it. And to this Purpose, I thought, the best way would be, not to read Lectures, as it were, of Anatomy upon the several Parts of it, and represent it Piece-meal, like a lifeless Carcass, divided and dissected; tho' I had been able to shew never so much Skill in the Operation; but to give an entire View of the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity, the connexion of its Parts between themselves and the Preference which it has to all other Religions; from
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whence, I knew, it must appear in as true a Light, and with as much Life and Force, as it could do under the Disadvantages, which might be expected from no better a Pen. There is an Excellency in every Part of our Religion separately consider'd, but the strength and vigour of each Part is in the Relation it has to the rest, and the several Parts must be taken altogether, if we would have a true Knowledge, and make a just Estimate of the Whole.

But that which I made my more particular Care, and which, I thought, the more requir'd my Pains, because I had not observed it to be much insisted upon by others, was to shew the Necessity of a Divine Revelation, the insufficiency of Natural Religion, and the Imperfections and Errors of Philosophy, as well as the manifest Falshood of the Religions both of the Heathens and of the Mahometans; and moreover to prove, that besides all other Things requisite to a Divine Revelation, the Religion delivered in the Old and New Testament has received a full Promulgation in all Parts of the World. From these Foundations thus laid and secur'd, we have no less than a Demonstration for the Truth of our Holy Religion.

We are often told by those that are no Friends to our Religion, that we must by all means take great Care of not being deceived through the Prejudices derived from our Education; but I believe it would be found upon
Enquiry

Enquiry, that such Men are so far from being prejudiced in Favour of our Religion, that their Prejudices lie extremly against it. For, besides the Corruption of Humane Nature always inclining to Error and Vice, tho' they had the Principles of Christianity instill'd into them in their tender Years, yet they could learn them then only as confess'd Truths, to be receiv'd for Articles of Faith and Rules of Life. But the first thing probably to which they have set themselves with any Application, was the reading of Heathen Authors, and when perhaps they have studied Philosophy and other Humane Learning for many Years, but never considered Divinity, as a Science, and have searched into it no farther, nor have any other Notion of it, than what they were taught in their Childhood or Youth, they look back upon their first Instructions as groundless, and fit only for Children, because they find little or nothing of them in those Authors, with whom they have been so long conversant, and whom upon many Accounts they have so just Reason to admire. This seems to be the Case of many who have read antient Heathen Authors, without the Regard, which ought always to be had to That, which is acknowledg'd by All, who have made any due Enquiry into these Things, to be the best Learning and of greatest Antiquity, and is no where to be had but from the Scriptures.

Others there are, who have often heard of the Names of *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Aristotle*, and of *Tully*, *Seneca*, and other Famous Writers; they find them frequently quoted, and commonly with Commendation, seldom to discover any Fault in them, unless it be in their Notions of Natural Philosophy, where Religion seems to be less concerned. They have heard too of the Greek and Latin Historians, and these, for any thing that they know or consider, may be as Faithful and as Antient as the best.

But tho' all these Authors have indeed very many Excellencies, yet we must not so far mistake, as to think all things Excellent which they deliver. I shall therefore, besides what I have already observed, make some farther Reflections in this place both upon the History, and upon the Philosophy of Heathen Nations, and then I hope I may be allowed to expostulate with the Adversaries of our Religion, concerning the Unreasonableness of their Proceedings, before I come to give a short Account of my present Undertaking.

I. Whatever knowledge almost we have now left of the Antiquities of other Heathen Nations, it comes conveyed down to us by the Greek Authors; and yet there is perhaps no Nation, which generally had a worse Reputation in matters of History, not only by common Fame and the Invectives of Satyrists, but from the Censures of the best Writers, and the Accusations which the Historians made

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one of another, as † *Josephus* shews of many whose Works are now lost. (a) *Thucydides* himself could not escape free from Censure, who complains of the negligence and unfaithfulness of the other Greek Historians, and he is thought to point particularly at *Herodotus*, whom *Plutarch* Exposed in a set Discourse: tho' much indeed has been said in Vindication of *Herodotus*, by *H. Stephens* and *Joaq. Camerarius*; and the Discoveries of Modern Travellers confirm many things in this History, which were formerly thought incredible. (b) *Strabo* has observ'd, that the Greeks knew little of the most Famous Nations of *Asia*, except the *Persians*, and that *Homer* knew nothing of the Empire of the *Assyrians* or *Medes*, but that he has omitted the mention of the Magnificence of *Babylon*, *Nineveh*, and *Ecbatane*, tho' he took notice of the *Aegyptian Thebes*, and of the Wealth both of that Place and of *Phenicia* (c) *Sallust* suspected that the *Athenians* too highly Magnified their own Actions, And there is in (d) *Vopiscus* a severe Charge against the Historians in general, that there is none of them, who has not falsified in some thing or other, particularly that as to *Livy*, *Sallust*, *Tacitus* and *Trogus Pompeius*, it might be clearly proved upon them. And (e) *Pliny* has fur-

† *Regibus, Populo Romano dedit Porfena, nominatim comprehensum invenimus, ne ferro, nisi in Agriculturâ, uterentur. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxxiv. c. 14.*

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nished us with an instance of great Partiality in the Roman Histories, which conceal that *Porfenna* in his League with the People of *Rome*, obliged them to make no use of Iron, but for the Tilling of the Grounds: This *Pliny* confesses was an express Article of that League: And how unlike is the Roman to the *Jewish* History in this very Instance? For in the Scriptures we find it twice mentioned, that the *Israelites* were reduced to that Condition, that they were permitted to have no Weapons of War. *Judg.* v. 8. *1 Sam.* xiii. 19.

But the Roman (f) Historians had more regard to the Honour of the Roman Name than to Truth. And it is no Commendation of the same Historians, that they take so little notice of the *Jews*, and say so little to their Advantage, when they do speak of them, since *Josephus* has proved the Leagues between the *Jews* and the *Romans*, and the Privileges granted them by the *Romans*, beyond all Denial, from the Tables then extant wherein they were contained.

(f) Tacent
id Histori-
ci, ut pu-
dendum
Histori po-
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tium Popu-
li; at Pli-
nius inge-
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tetur. Groi-
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xiii. 19.

* Liv. lib.
6. c. 1.

* *Livy* declares that most of the Monuments of Antiquity, whether Publick or Private, were destroyed, when the City was Burnt by the *Gauls*, and that for this Reason, his History to the rebuilding of the City, near four hundred years after it was first Built, is but uncertain.

The most Antient Writings, which had any Relation to History among the *Romans*, were

were their Funeral Orations: These were preserved in their several Families, which as (g) *Tully* confesseth, caused their History to be faulty, many things being inserted in this sort of Works, which were never done, false Triumphs, false Consulships, and false Genealogies. The *Annales* (h) *Maximi* were of good use, but they contained only the first Lines and rough Draughts of History, which appeared quite another thing, when it was filled up, and Represented entire with the Reasons and Circumstances of Affairs, according to the Pleasure or Skill of the Writer. But the Praises (i) of their Ancestors were sung in Verse at their Banquets, where strict Truth could rarely be heard. The Generals of Armies sometimes had (k) their Historians or Poets along with them, whom they liberally rewarded; we may be sure not for telling when they were beaten. *Atticus* (l) in *Tully* says, it was a thing of course to relate Matters of History, not according to Truth, but in such a manner, as might best shew the Wit and Eloquence of the Writers. *Tully* lays * it down as a known and fundamental Rule of History, that an Historian should dare to say any Truth, but nothing that is false. Yet in an Epistle to *Luceius*, whom he entreats to Write the History of his own Ministration of Affairs, he earnestly beseeches † *Luceius*, in plain Terms to neglect the Laws of History in his Favour,

(g) Lic.
Brut.
(h) Id. de
Orat. lib.
2.
(i) Id.
Brut.
(k) Id. Pro
Archia Po-
eta.
(l) Quoni-
am quidem
concessum
est Rhetoribus
emendi in Hi-
storia, ut
ut aliquid
dicere pos-
sint arguti-
us Id. Brut.
* De Orat.
lib. 2.
† Epist.
FAMIL. lib.
5. Epist.
12. Ad
Attic. lib.
4. Epist. 6.

and to disregard Truth. And as if this had been a thing not unusual, or, at least, warrantable enough; he commends this Epistle in another to *Atticus*, and desires him to promote the Design. It has been remarked by some as a Fate upon *Cicero*, that this Testimony of his Vanity should remain, when the History, of which he was so desirous, is lost, if it was ever Written: But who knows how many such Epistles are lost, when the Histories are preserved? This is in common with the Greek and Latin Historians, that they put such Speeches as they think fit, into the Mouths of the several Persons concerned in the Actions they relate, which gives another View and Appearance to the Scene of Affairs, and acquaints us, not what such Persons said or thought, but what the Historian would have spoke, and what Advice he would have given, if he had been in their Place. *Herodotus* has much of the Simplicity of Antient times, his Speeches are Natural, containing for the most part but a bare Narrative of what was said or done, only the Persons tell their own Story. But of all the Speeches which are to be met withal in any History, there are none so Natural, or which have such plain Characters of Truth in them, as those in the Scriptures.

The Antiquities of *China* were destroyed about two hundred years before Christ, and from the several Relations given of that Matter

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ter by different Authors, it appears, that the *Chineses* are rather willing to have it believ'd, that their old Books were in some strange manner or other preserv'd, than that they are able to make it out.

It was the Custom of the *Aegyptians* to omit the mention of these Persons, of whom they had any dislike, or who had made themselves odious to them. Thus in the xxth Dynasty of their Kings there is a total Vacancy for the space of clxxviii Years, which the Learned Mr. *Greaves*, with great Probability Supplies with the Names of those Kings, who built the Pyramides, two whereof, *Cheops* and *Chephren*, as ^(m) *Herodotus* says, the *Aegyptians* out of ^{(m) Herod. lib. 2. c. 128.} Hatred to them, would not so much as name, but called the Pyramides, which they had erected, the *Pyramides of Philiton*, a Shepherd, who in those days fed his Cattle there: *The which Hatred*, says ⁽ⁿ⁾ Mr. *Greaves*, occasioned by ^{(n) Diodor. sic. lib. 1. Greaves Pyramido-graph.} their Oppressions, as *Diodorus* also mentions, might cause *Manethos* to omit the rest, especially *Sabachus* an *Aethiopian*, and an *Usurper*. But whatever account is to be given of the *Aegyptian* History in that particular, this makes the History of that Nation in general very uncertain, and may afford a sufficient Reason, why the *Jews* are either omitted, or misrepresented by Heathen Historians, who had what they relate of them from the *Aegyptians*; and the *Hebrews* neither liv'd with the *Aegyptians*, nor left them, upon such Terms, as to have their

Story

Story faithfully told by a Nation, who would suffer nothing to pass down to Posterity, if they could help it, that was displeasing to them, when it happened; but if any thing were so Notorious, as not to be capable of being wholly stifled, they would be sure to vary and deface it with false Circumstances in the Reports, which they gave out concerning it.

And here I must once more complain of Mr. Blount, who, as if he had been an *Aegyptian* Historian, that had an implacable Hatred of our Religion, professing to translate that place of *Tacitus*, which concerns the Original of the *Jews*, cuts his Translation short, and goes no farther than the Vilifying and false part of the Account, which *Tacitus* gives; for his Character of their Religion, and the Relation of what *Pompey* discovered upon his Entrance into the Temple, is omitted. And besides, that which he has translated, is far from being exact: but as I observed before, that in speaking of the Ark, he had made Sir *Thomas Brown* say, that *will not appear feasible*, which the Learned Knight had said, *will appear feasible*: so he has dealt no better with *Tacitus*, making him likewise deny what he had affirmed: *Tacitus* (°) says, *Hi ritus quoquo modo inducti Antiquitate defenduntur. These Rites, by what means soever introduced, are defended by their Antiquity*: which (P) Mr. Blount translates thus; *But by what means soever they have been introduced, they have no Antiquity*

(o) *Tacit. Hist. lib. v.*

(p) *Orac. of Reason. P. 132.*

tiquity for their Patronization. This is to use the History of *Tacitus* as ill as he doth that of the Bible, and much worse than *Tacitus* himself has done the *Jews*. For if it be rightly understood, what *Tacitus* has written of the *Jews* proves a very remarkable Vindication of their Religion. He says indeed that they consecrated the Image of an *As*, but he says it only as a Report, which he confutes afterwards himself by acknowledging, that *Pompey*, when he entred into the Temple, found no Image in it; and giving an Account of their Religion, he says: *Aegyptij pelraque Animalia, effigiesque compositas venerantur. Judaei mente solâ, unumque numen intelligunt. Profanos, qui Deum imagines mortalibus materiis, in species Hominum effingunt. Summum illud, eternum, neque mutabile, neque interiturum. Igitur nulla simulachra Urbibus suis, nedum Templis sunt.* Which is so contrary to what this Historian writes before in these words; *Effigiem animalis, quo monstrante, errorem sitimque depulerunt, penetrati sacravere*, that some have charged him with contradicting himself; but it is evident, that the Story of their Worshiping an *As*, is related as a Tradition, which is afterwards sufficiently confuted by his own Account of their Doctrine and Worship, and by what *Pompey* found, *Nullâ ritus Deum Effigie, vacuam sedem, & inania Arcana.* Whatever his Design was, and however his obscure way of writ-
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ing has made him to be misunderstood, there can hardly be any thing said more for the Truth and Honour of the Jewish Religion, than what Tacitus has delivered of it.

(9) Pro Flacco.

And if any one will compare, that which Tully hath said in the same (9) Oration of the Greeks and of the Jews, he must conclude, that what is spoken against the Jews, is rather to their Commendation, than to their Disgrace. Tully there declares the Greeks to be of no Credit nor Esteem, but unfaithful, and of the worst Reputation, even to a Proverb in their Testimonies and Oaths. He is careful not to involve the Athenians and Lacedemonians in the common Scandal, who appeared for his Client, and gives a high Character of the Massilians, and would seem to confine his Discourse to the Asiatick Greeks, by whose own Confession, he says, the People of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia were proverbially Infamous. When he has expressed this Contempt of the Greeks, he falls next upon the Jews: But what has he to say of them? He calls their Religion a barbarous Superstition, and Jerusalem, a Suspicious and Railing City, and he pronounces the Jewish Religion to be unsuitable to the Splendor and Gravity, and the Customs of the Romans; he insinuates that they were a People not well affected to the Roman State, and urges the Conquest of them by Pompey, as an Argument against the Truth of their Religion.

gion. When so very Learned an Orator had nothing but these common Topicks of Slander to charge them withal, tho' it was for the Interest of his Cause to speak the worst he knew of them; what could be a greater Justification of the Jews and their Religion? One of the Accusations laid against Flaccus, whose Defence Tully had undertaken, was, that Summs of Gold having been wont to be sent out of Italy, and out of all the Roman Provinces to the Temple at Jerusalem, Flaccus had forbidden any to be exported from Asia. Here it concern'd Tully to expose the Worship of the Jews, and to vindicate the Prohibition relating to it; but he, who never spoke little upon any Subject, that could afford a Scope for his Eloquence, says so little here to the dispraise of the Jews and their Religion, that the Commendation of another had been less to their Honour. It is observable that Tully mentions nothing of their Worshiping an Ass, which was so groundless and foolish a Slander, that it is hard to imagine what could give occasion to it, and perhaps no better Account of it can be assigned, than that the Enemies of their Religion were resolved to fasten the worst and most ridiculous Falshood they could upon it. But if it may be permitted me to add a Conjecture to those which have been made by others; it seems probable, that the highest degree of Excommunication among the Jews being styled Shammatha, which is the

† Vid.
Grot. &
Ham. ad
1 Cor. xvi.
22.

the same with *Maran-Atha*, *Sham* signifying *Lord*, as † *Maran* also doth in the *Syriac* and other Languages; and *Atha* signifying *cometh*; *Atha* might either Ignorantly or Maliciously be mistaken for *Athon*, which signifies an *Ass*. And it is likely, that this Calumny might be first raised by some Body, who had been Excommunicated, and turned Apostate.

It would be a very wrong inference from what has been said, to conclude, that there is no certainty in the Greek and Latin, and other Heathen Historians: For the Circumstances of the Relation, and the Consent of divers Authors, may put most parts of History past doubt. But it ought to be considered, that those which have been mentioned, are exceptions, to which the Sacred Historians are by no means liable; they do not charge one another with Falshood, nothing can be discovered of Partiality in their Writings, but they tell the most disgraceful Truths of their Ancestors, and of themselves; and the History it self has so many publick Circumstances, that they clear it beyond all suspicion of Deceit. If the Names of some Men be omitted, upon particular occasions, in the Scriptures; we find them mentioned there upon others. And there is evident Reason, that the Names of infamous Men should in some Cases be omitted, and should not be inserted in Genealogies, and enrolled in the Registers of Honour.

nour. But when the Memory of Persons and Actions is totally suppress, this must extremly abate the Credit of any History. The *Jews* are the only People in the World, that have had their Antiquities by an uninterrupted Tradition delivered down and preserved in an Authentick Book, unanimously asserted by the whole Nation, in all Ages, which they have never changed nor altered, but have in great numbers sacrificed their Lives in Testimony of it. If the Heathens in divers things contradict the History of the *Jews*, they contradict one another as much in the Accounts of their own Antiquities, and what they relate of the *Jews*, is upon uncertain and contrary Reports. If they conceal what concerns the *Jews*, it was their Custom to stifle that which did not please them. The Histories as well as the Religion of most other Nations were kept secret, and not communicated to the People, no Book of History among them was ever put into the hands of a whole Nation, with a strict Charge to every one to read and study it, as the Books of *Moses* were, when the Principal and most Memorable things related, were within the knowledge and Memory of all that read them. The *Jews* were under a necessity of preserving their Genealogies, with all imaginable Care and Exactness, if they would make good the Claim and Title to their Inheritances, so that the meanest among them could with
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the 'greatest certainty derive his Line from *Adam*, whereas the *Persian* Kings, as we learn from (r) *Herodotus*, could boast but of a short Descent, and the Kings and Emperours of the *Romans* and of other Nations, to advance their Pedigrees were forced to have recourse to fabulous Reports. And the Heathen Accounts of the Original, not only of particular Families, but of the several Nations of the World, are acknowledged to be Fabulous, or, at the best, but very uncertain; by the most accurate Historians.

The Account of the Prophecies and Miracles contained in the Scriptures was impossible to be mistaken at first, and it has been transmitted with all the certainty that any History is capable of, to Posterity. And the Writers of the Old and New Testament all agree in the Account of the Creation, of the Deluge, of *Abraham* and the other Patriarchs, of the Bondage of the *Israelites* in *Aegypt*, their Miraculous Deliverance from thence, and their Journyng into the Land of *Canaan*; they all frequently assert, suppose or imply the Truth of these things; there is a continued Series and Line of Truth observable throughout the whole Scriptures. But among Heathen Writers it is otherwise; they contradict one another in Matters of any considerable Antiquity, if they agree in some material Passages, it is commonly with much variation in the Circumstances, and with great

(r) *Herod.*
lib. vii. c.
11.

great Uncertainty and Doubtfulness; and the things in which they most agree, are such as have been taken from the Scriptures, which compose a Book, that if it were but for the Antiquity and Learning of it, is the most valuable of any Book in the World, and nothing but Vice and Ignorance, and that which is the worst sort of Ignorance, a Pretence to Learning could make it so much despised.

II. If the Histories of Heathen Nations be so little to be relied upon, their Philosophy will appear to be worthy of no more Regard, which, for any thing of Truth and Usefulness there is to be found in it, depends so much upon Historical Traditions. That Poetry is the most antient way of Writing, is not only asserted by Heathen Authors, but may with great probability be made out from the Scripture it self. Poets were the Chief upholders of the Religion and the Philosophy in use among the Heathens; both these were at the first taught in short Maxims, which, that they might be the better received, and the more easily retain'd in Memory, were put into Verse, without any farther Ornament than just what was necessary to give a clear and full Expression to their Notions and Precepts. (s) *Socrates* and the Philosophers of his time had a value for the Verses of *Theognis*, and those which go under the Name of *Pythagoras*, are at least as antient as (t) *Chrysippus*, who alleg'd their

(s) *Xenoph.*
Conviu. §
Memorab.
lib. 1.

(t) *Apud*
A. Gall.
lib. vi. c. 2.

Autho.

Authority. *Solon* himself wrote Elegies, whereof some Remains are still preserv'd. This gave the Poets a mighty Reputation, and we find not only *Solon*, but others of them quoted and appeal'd to by *Demosthenes* and *Æschines* in the Courts of Judicature, as well as by Philosophers in their Discourses. But the Poets for the more delightful Entertainment of the People, not only indulged themselves in that antient and useful way of Instruction by Fables (for he (u) was hardly esteem'd a Poet, who had been the Authors of none) but they became the Promoters of all manner of Superstitions and Idolatrous Worship; the Oracles were delivered in Verse, every Poet wrote something in Honour of the false Gods, and (w) *Socrates* himself, during his Imprisonment, made a Hymn in praise of *Apollo*. By which means the Original Notions of Religion and Vertue were so obscured and corrupted, that it was impossible in any Humane way to provide a sufficient Remedy. *Plato* complain'd of the Fictions of Poets; but when he set himself to recover Men to a true Sense and Notion of things by the help of some antient Traditions, which he had met withal, he fell into very absurd and sinful Errors, and both he and *Socrates* practis'd the Idolatries of their Country. They asserted many excellent Truths, which they had received, as they profess, from Antiquity; but whenever they argu'd any Point, they common-

(u) ἄγνοιασας ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δεόσι, εἶπερ μέλλοι ποιητὴς εἶναι, ποιῆν μύθος, ἀλλ' ἔλογος. Plat. Phæl. (w) Plat. ib.

commonly fell into mistakes, which oftentimes were of very ill consequence. So weak a thing is Humane Wisdom without the guidance of Divine Revelation! And of this the Philosophers were so sensible, that divers of them would have it thought, that they had some supernatural Assistance, tho' they were able to bring no sufficient Proof of it.

The Pretences of others deserve no Regard; their Impostures were too Notorious to admit of any Denial or Excuse. The Genius of *Socrates* may be supposed Worthy of more Consideration: yet it amounts to no more than this, that *Socrates* declared, that a certain Genius had accompanied him from his Childhood, which often forbad him to do what he had design'd; but never put him upon doing of any thing; and by the Information of this Genius, he often forewarned his Friends of the ill Success of what they were about to undertake. But after the best Search I have been able to make concerning this Genius of *Socrates*, I cannot but look upon it as an intricate and perplex Business. It may suffice in this place to observe, that (x) *Xenophon* acquaints us, that when he advised with *Socrates*, whether he should follow *Cyrus* in his Expedition, *Socrates* sent him to the Oracle of *Apollo*, who, he said, was to be consulted, in obscure and uncertain Affairs; which affords no very advantageous Character either of *Socrates* himself, or of his Ge-

(x) *Xenoph. de exped. Cyri. lib. 111.*

(y) Cic. de Divin. lib. 1. nius. (1) Tully informs us, that *Antipater* the Stoick, had made a Collection of such things as *Socrates's* Genius had discovered to him; but whatever they were, it appears that *Tully* had little regard to them. And this we are sure of, that all the Philosophy of *Socrates* ended in nothing but Uncertainties: For when he had just before his Death discours'd of the State after this Life, the most that he could say to his Friends in Conclusion, was, (2) *Plato* that they had a Noble Prize before them, great Hopes, and a glorious Venture, and therefore ought to possess and Charm their Minds with those Thoughts. The suggestions of his Genius signified little to him, if it left him no better instructed, as to a future State, in the last Moments of his Life.

It must be acknowledg'd that *Socrates* made great Improvements in the Moral and useful part of Philosophy: He was of an excellent Understanding; loving and belov'd of honest Men, and had Courage and Resolution enough to bear the Affronts and withstand the Malice of others; he minded none but the practical Doctrines of Philosophy, and tho' he never had travelled in search after Learning, as it was the Custom in those Ages for Philosophers to do, but scarce ever stir'd out of *Athens*; yet he knew how to make the best use of the Notions which were brought to him by those, who had been in foreign Countries.

tries. It must be confess'd, that if *Plato* had not made *Socrates* the Author of things which he had never said, as not only (a) *Xenophon*, (a) *A. Gell. lib. 14. c. 3. Diog. Laert. in Platon.* but *Socrates* himself declar'd; but had given us as plain an Account of *Socrates's* Philosophy, as *Arrian* has of that of *Epictetus*, we might have known more of him than we now are able to do. But from what *Plato* and *Xenophon* have said of *Socrates*, we may be assur'd, that he did not refrain from Idolatrous Worship, nor reject the Heathen Oracles, nor deliver his own Doctrines without much Uncertainty and Diffidence.

Plato carried his Philosophy to far greater Heights than *Socrates* had done, and the sublimer Parts of it were not to be discovered to the Vulgar; which were so difficult, that he declares to (b) *Dionysius*, that Men of Great Abilities, and as great Application and Industry, after the Study of thirty Years, at last, with much ado, understood them. Some things were not to be written at all, or so obscurely as not to be intelligible, if they should fall into the hands of Men, who were not fit to be trusted with the Secret of them; and he acknowledgeth that his best and only sure Argument for the Immortality of the Soul, without the Knowledge of which, all Philosophy can be but of little worth, was from (c) antient and sacred Tradition. The Notions and Traditions, which *Plato* had brought from other Countries, with his delightful way of setting them

them forth, gain'd him great Reputation; some Attempts were made by himself and those of his Sect, to bring his Laws into practice, and to erect a Commonwealth after the Model of them; his Name and Memory was had in Great Esteem, his Birth-day was kept, and the Solemnity of it was renewed about two hundred Years ago, by some of his Admirers, as we are told by ^(d) *Ficinus*, one of that Society. But there is too much Alloy found in his Philosophy for any Endeavours to gain it a constant and general Reception. His Errors in some Cases are so notoriously gross and scandalous, that ^(*) *Serranus* sets over against them in the Margin, *Prima Insania hominis delirantis*, and *Portentosa Insania*. ^(e) *Aristotle* had studied twenty Years under *Plato*, but he so often confutes and contradicts his Master, that he has been charged with Ingratitude for it. And if *Socrates* and *Plato* did not firmly believe the Souls Immortality, *Aristotle* believ'd the contrary, as ^(f) many have prov'd out of several places in his Works. ^(*) His *Will* shews that he was both in his Practice and Judgment for the Idolatries of his Country. His Books by an Accident lay conceal'd, till they were brought to Rome upon the taking of *Athens* ^(g) by *Sylla*. But they were known to few Philosophers in ^(h) *Tully's* time. And a Learned Author has given an Account, what their Fate has been since.

(d) *Comment. in Conviv. Plat. de Amore c. 1.*

(x) *Vid. Plat. de Rep. p. b. lib. v. Serranus edit.*

(e) *Orig. Cels. lib. 2.*

(f) *vid. Fac. biling. in Greg. Narium. Orat. 35.*

(x) *Diog. Laert.*

(g) *Strabo lib. 13. Plut. in Sylla.*

(h) *Lic. Topic.*

The Sect of the Stoicks is observed by *Josephus* in the Account of his own Life, to have been like that of the Pharisees: which ⁽ⁱ⁾ *Grotius* says, is no wonder, since in *Cyprus*, ^{(i) Grot. ad Diat. xxii. 23.} which was *Zeno's* Native Country, there were always many *Jews*. But if the Stoicks were at first indebted to the *Jews*, they certainly afterwards borrow'd much more from the *Christians*. This Sect was very numerous, and had Men of great Note in the Primitive Ages of Christianity, who did not lose the opportunity offer'd them of improving it. But the Philosophers then began to carry on a Joint-Interest, and those who denominated themselves from any particular Sect, were no longer strict in adhering nicely to its Principles. For upon the preaching of the Gospel to the World, the Philosophers thought it concern'd them to review all that had been formerly written, to unite their Forces, and select those Notions out of every Sect, which were most plausible, omitting such as they saw would then give Offence: and it appears that they were greatly beholden to the Religion which they opposed and pretended to despise; it is evident, that they had read the Scriptures, and do sometimes make use of Terms which they had taken from thence, unknown to former Philosophers. But Philosophy after all their Endeavours still retaining many Errors, and wanting that Evidence and Authority, which is the foundation of all true Religion, could never maintain

maintain its ground against that Religion, which was preach'd by those, whom they contemned as ignorant Men; but which in a short time wrought such a Reformation in the World, as the Philosophy of all Ages had been never able to effect.

It is not to be denied that there were many great and eminent Examples among the Heathen; but then there were always as great Enormities allow'd in the most civiliz'd Nations. Philosophy was (*) prohibited by three of the Principal States of Greece, by the Thebans, the Spartans, and the Argives. And the Romans, who have set so many Famous Examples to the World, were little oblig'd to Philosophy: for all their Worth and Greatness was rais'd upon the Stock only of common Notions, the Traditions that they had receiv'd with the rest of Mankind, and the Laws brought from Athens, which were enacted by Solon, who had been in Egypt at a time, when the Jews were there in sufficient Numbers. But it was a long while before Philosophers were suffered at Rome, they had been (k) expell'd by the Senate: Tully was the first that brought Philosophy into any Credit there, and by the Apologies which he often makes for his giving himself to the Study of it, we may perceive under what Prejudices it then lay among the Romans, and that there was need of all his Wit and Eloquence to gain it Admission.

A

A strict Discipline both in Peace and War, great Application and Industry, by which they improved their common Notions, and arriv'd to wonderful Experience and Dexterity in the Management of Affairs, a zealous Love of their Country, and an unparallell'd Constancy, manifest in all their Actions, and especially in the Observation of their Laws, rais'd the Romans to that mighty Height and Extent of Empire. But that which they retain'd of Truth in relation to Matters of Religion had been so abused and disguised with Fabulous Corruptions, that at length it had generally lost all Belief amongst them. (l) Tully (l) *Pro Clu-* made no Scruple at a publick Tryal in a Court *entis.* of Judicature, to deny the Punishments of the Wicked in a future State, as a ridiculous Fiction, which shews a strange Corruption of Principles in that Age; when he could propose to himself to gain his Cause by speaking in that manner. In another Oration, he says, (m) *Non semper superet vera illa & directa* (m) *Pro* *Ratio, vincat aliquando cupiditas, voluptasque* *M. Calio-* *rationem.* That this should be spoken in a publick Pleading by one of the Gravest and most Learned of all the Romans, shews how little either the Philosophy which he had studied, or the Roman Laws, themselves could do towards the Establishment of Vertue, and that the Modesty of Youth, and the Vertue and Honour of Families must be secur'd upon some better Principles. Afterwards he adds: *Verum*

rùm si quis est, qui etiam meretriciis Amoris interdium iuventuti putet, est ille quidem valde severus: Negare non possum, sed abhorret non modo ab huius seculi licentia, verùm etiam à Majorum consuetudine atque concessis. I believe there is scarce any man so far lost to all Shame among Christians, that he would be willing to hear himself so defended in a Publick Court, or any Judge that would admit of such a Defence: which is a manifest Argument of the Excellency of the Christian Religion, that it lays such a powerful Restraint upon Men. But this looseness of Manners was the fatal Fore-runner of that horrid and monstrous Lewdness, which afterwards, like a Leprosy, overspread the Roman Empire. The Conspiracies of that Time, which so much endanger'd the State, were contriv'd by Libertines, and no greater Cruelties have ever been committed than by this Sort of Men, when once they have got into Power; as may be seen in *Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, &c.* And *Tully* himself perhaps might feel the Effects of these Encouragements to Vice, being kill'd by a Villain, whose Life he had formerly saved by that Eloquence, which was sometimes employ'd, as if he had been retain'd against Vertue.

It must be owned that *Tully* has in many places of his Works laid down admirable Rules of Vertue, but then it is with little or no Regard to such Principles as are the only

only sure Foundations of a Vertuous Life, viz. the Fear of God, and the Expectation of Rewards or Punishments after Death; and such was the defect of his Philosophy, that he could be positive and certain in nothing. *Seneca*, as he professeth, has taken many of his best Precepts from *Epicurus*, which without a due Consideration had of a God and a Providence, are no better than Prudent Cautions against Temporal Evils, either of Body or Mind. *Seneca* many times diverts rather than instructs, what he says is always fine, but not always solid, he dances upon the surface, according to *Quintilian's* Censure of him, but seldom descends to the depth of things; and it were well if that Character, which he has given of *Seneca's* style, might not be applyed to his Sense, *abundat dulcibus Vitiis*, a luscious Poison sometimes diffuseth it self in his Writings. *Seneca* (*) derides the subtilty and trifling both of *Zeno* and *Chrysippus*; but he did it seems, think himself more concern'd to expose them for being Teachers of ill Doctrins: tho upon this account they were so very scandalous, that *Sextus* (**) *Empiricus* endeavours to prove from their Words, that there is no real and certain Difference betwixt Vertue and Vice.

The bare knowledge of the Christian Doctrine even without a sincere belief of its Authority, has taught Men to abhor those Crimes

(*) *Sen. Epist. 82. de benefic. lib. 3. c. 3, 4.*

(**) *Sext. Empir. Pyrrh. Hypot. lib. 3. c. 24, 25.*

Children; which was a great Concession in a Philosopher. Solon was as Famous for his Philosophy as for his Laws, and the Legislator to that State, which was the Seat and proper Soil, as it were of Philosophy, by an expres Law (*) indemnified all that killed their Children, and the Philosophers were ever true to these Principles.

(x) Sext. Empiric. Pyrrh. Hypot. lib. 3. c. 24.

I have insisted upon this the more not only because it is an evident instance of the insufficiency of Heathen Philosophy, but because some Readers may be as difficult to believe a thing, which must needs seem very Monstrous to Christians, as (†) Lipsius's Friend was, to whom he wrote a long Epistle, to convince him that this was the Practice of Heathen Nations, and agreeable to the Judgment of their Philosophers: So that many of the Adversaries of the Christian Faith, may perhaps owe their Lives to that Religion which they Blaspheme.

(†) Ad Del. GasCent. 1. Epist. 85.

I have purposely avoided too curious an enquiry into the lives of the Philosophers, and rather chose to cast a Veil over what not only their Enemies but their Friends have said of them. The Practice of Men is generally worse than they confess it ought to be; they never live above their Rule and Profession; it is well if in most things, they do not fall much short of it; and if their Principles be Bad, what must we expect from their Examples? But the Actions of the Philosophers

Crimes which were approved of by the Philosophers, and Practised in the Wisest Heathen Nations: and when things notoriously Evil were received and taught by those, who did and said so many things well, it is Evident, that what was good was not owing so much to the strength of their own Reason, as to some higher Principle. I will here give but one Instance, and it shall be concerning the Lawfulness of killing Infants, or exposing them to be starved or destroyed. This was the expres Doctrine of

(n) Plato; and Aristotle who contradicts him in most other things, follows him in this. Indeed this was so general a Practice, (o) that it is taken particular Notice of that the Thebans had a Law to forbid it. (p) Romulus made a Law to regulate this Practice, and to hinder it in some Cases; (q) Tacitus observes it as a thing deserving his Remark, that this was not practised either by the Jews or the Germans, tho' the latter had a Custom of casting their Children into the Rhine for a tryal of their legitimacy. But that which is more strange is (r) that Seneca and Plutarch who liv'd since the Preaching of the Gospel, should approve of such Barbarous Cruelty. (s) Hierocles, who as Lactantius informs us, was well acquainted with the Scriptures, was contented to say that it is natural and answerable to the ends of Marriage to bring up all, or at least, most Children;

(n) Plat. de Repub. lib. v. Aristot. Polit. lib. viii. c. 16.

(o) Aelian. lib. ii. c. 7.

(p) Dionys. Halicarn. lib. 2.

(q) Tacit. Hist. lib. v. & de Morib. Germ. cum notis Lips.

(r) Senec. de Ira lib. 1. c. 15.

Plut. in Lycurg.

(s) Frigm. apud Stob. serm. 73.

phers concerned those with whom they lived, our Business is with their Writings; and I need not fear the Censures of Learned and Judicious Men in any thing I have said of them; for they will acknowledge it to be Truth, and others ought to be told so, that they be no longer willing to change the Bible for the Works of Philosophers, which they commonly read and understand as little as they do the Bible it self.

The utmost that Philosophy could reach, was no farther than to uncertain Hopes and doubtful Arguments. But our Saviour and his Apostles *taught with Authority*, and not as did the Philosophers; *The Words which they spake, they were Spirit, and they were Life*; They came with full Power, and had their Credentials from Heaven to produce, which are the same that we now allege for the Authority of their Commission. And what can be more certain than plain Matter of Fact, which is clearly prov'd by undeniable Circumstances, and by Witnesses beyond Exception, and which is of that Nature, that all the Divine Attributes are engag'd for the Truth of it? It is strange that Men should pretend to fetch their Infidelity from the Depths of Philosophy, and the *Oracles of Reason*; as if any floating, confus'd Notions might not serve for objections. But it is to the advantage of a bad Cause, to involve it in tedious and unnecessary Disputes, to make Digressions
into

into doubtful Points of Criticism and Philosophy, to amuse the Reader, and draw him off from the main Question: Whereas a good Cause may commonly be brought to a clear and short Issue. The present Controversy will admit of all kinds of Learning, but has no need of it. My Business therefore has been to free this Matter, as much as may be, from all the Intricacies of Learning, to reduce it to plain Circumstances of Fact, whereof every man may be capable of making a true Judgment, and to bring it to that very Case, in which St. John argues; *He that believeth not God hath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son.* 1 John v. 10.

And how can we forbear to adore the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who by the wonderful Dispensations of his Providence, has not suffered himself to be *without Witness* in any Age or Nation? If Idolatry spread it self from *Egypt* into many other parts of the World, as (*) *Herodotus* and *Diodorus Siculus* have shewn, we have the more reason to admire the wisdom of divine Providence in appointing *Egypt* to be the place where the People of *Israel* did so long sojourn, and where so many signal Miracles were wrought to give a check and stop to Idolatry in the very Source and Fountain of it, if Men had not been beyond all measure obstinate in their Folly and Disobedience.

And

(u) ουδε γαρ δια Ιουδαϊας μόνως δ νόμος ην, εδεδειχθη αυτες μόνως επιμνησθηται. το κη παρ εβραϊων εις ων κοντο. πλους δε της οικουμνης εσαν διδασκαλοι ιερου της πειθευ γνωσεως, κη της καταφυχην πολιτίας. St. Athan. de Incarnatione: Verbi Dei.

And the same goodness of God has not been wanting to any Nation of the World. For, (u) tho' the Law of *Moses* was peculiarly designed for the People of *Israel*, yet provision was made for the receiving of all such as were willing to become partakers of it, to the observation even of their ceremonial and typical Service; none besides the *Israelites* were required to observe it, but neither were any excluded from it. And by the constitution of the *Jewish* Law and Government, as well as by the Providence of God in all his Dispensations towards that People, effectual Care was taken that all the necessary points of Religion which concern Mankind in general, should by them be communicated to the rest of the World. But the Christian Religion was by its original Institution and Design equally extended to all Nations, and was soon propagated all over the World. Nations but lately known to us have been constant objects of the Divine Care, and had early Discoveries made to them of the reveal'd Will of God, as I have proved at large by the Testimonies of Protestants as well as of Papists. And it is very observable, which

(u) *Varen.* in some places at least, have Preached the substance of Christianity without the mixture of many of those Doctrins, which are peculiar to the Roman Communion; and he owns that their Success has been very great.

III. It

III. It (w) was the opinion of a converted Mandarin, *That those who had any occasion to hear the Law of God, or to read the Books which treat of it, and did not judge it to be true, wanted Brains, and were void of Understanding.* And it might well be thought incredible, if we did not find it true in Experience, that when Christianity has gained so much upon Heathens, and (x) *Turks* have become its Profelytes and Martyrs, even in *Constantinople* it self; it should notwithstanding grow into Contempt among profess'd Christians, who dispute every Article of the Faith, into which they were Baptized, and every Commandment, which they have undertaken, and solemnly vowed to obey.

But do they not prove what they pretend? As little of that as may be; but they say it, and say it often and confidently, and perhaps sometimes wittily, and this must pass for Proof. But do Men love, or will they endure to be talk'd or jested out of any thing that is dear to them but their Souls? Let the Wit be what they please, or can fancy it to be, certainly they must be much too fond of it who can be contented to lose not only their best Friend, but Heaven it self for a Jest, which perhaps, after all, would be little taken notice of on another Subject, and has nothing to recommend it but Profaneness, and that alone which should make it abhor'd, causeth it to be admired.

d

As

As there is nothing so bad but some may pretend to speak for it (as a Panegyrick has been written upon *Buſiris*, and another upon *Nero* so nothing is so excellent but it may be spoken against; and if no Right or Title must be allowed as true or certain, which may be questioned or disputed, it is hard to say what any Man can have that he may call his own. But let it be consider'd that there is little Learning or Judgment required in advancing or maintaining new and strange Doctrines, and in rejecting the old. Things may be so plain, as for that very Reason to be hard to prove, because there is nothing plainer to prove them by; a bold denial of the truth of our Senses and Faculties may seem to promise something of more than ordinary subtilty; though there be no more in it than this, that he who resolves to deny the very grounds and foundations of all Reasoning, has taken effectual care not to be confuted. It is a mistake to think that it is easiest to speak upon a common Subject; a Man indeed can never want something to say upon such a Subject, but he is prevented in what he should say, it is known before-hand, and expected from him: The nicest thing of all is to enforce and improve known Arguments, and to give new Life, and a better Genius, as it were, to that which has been said a thousand times before. It is usually easiest to discourse on the wrong side of a Question, because there never is so little scope for

for Fancy and Invention, as when a Man is confined to strict Truth; Error will admit of all Extravagancies, but Truth is a severe and uniform thing, and there are those whom any Extravagancy almost will please, for the novelty of it. There may be some Art required to make a known Story delightful in the relating, but News is commonly welcome, tho' it be never so ill told, and the most beautiful and useful Creatures are little regarded, when the worst of Monsters are the more gazed at the more they be deformed. Let those who make such a noise with their Singularity, but change the Subject, and try how it will succeed with them, they will soon find the difference, and perceive that they will cease to be in vogue, when they have no longer the vanity and ill nature, and vices of Men on their side.

It is with our Minds in this respect, as it is with our Bodies, when once they are well supplied with all that is necessary or convenient, they begin to loath wholesome Food, and to seek out for varieties of Luxury, and are fond of any thing that may please them to their hurt. It is thus in every Art and Science, especially in such as all Men think themselves more or less concern'd to know. Men first were contented to speak so as to be understood, and to express their meaning plainly and naturally with Truth and Simplicity to one another; afterwards speaking became an Art,

and at last in the best and most elegant Languages, it degenerated into nothing but Affectation, and all the ridiculousness of a false Eloquence. The same thing happened in Philosophy; the *Scepticks* carried this innovating humour to the utmost Extravagancy; for, the Primitive Traditions being obscured and corrupted, and every Succession of Philosophers striving to set up for themselves, and to outgo each other, they had brought it to that pass, that *Tully*, who knew as well as any Man, says, that nothing can be more absurd than what some of the Philosophers held, but the Author of the *Leviathan* proceeds farther, and observes that (*) *no Living Creature is subject to the Privilege of Absurdity but Man only, and of Men, those are of all most subject to it that profess Philosophy.* And if we will not believe him upon his word, he has given us his Example for it; few Men, I think, having written more extravagant things than he has done in every part of Philosophy; if Religion were set aside, he would never have escaped among the Philosophers and Mathematicians of any Age; he disputed the Principles of Geometry, as well as the Foundations of all Religion, and both with a like Success. He calls *Absurdity* the Privilege of Mankind, a strange Privilege! which he has made the most of. But since with a little time the Novelty and Varnish of his odd Opinions are worn off, they are not now, that I have

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(*) *Levi-*
ath. part
1. c. 5.

perceived, so much regarded, but have been forced to give way to other Notions which are as Bad, and have nothing more to recommend them, but that they are of a later Date and a newer Fashion.

There is little Reason why any one should value himself for talking against received Doctrins, and persuading others to what they are already but too much inclin'd. But to rescue Antient and despised Truths, and bring them into Reputation; to convince the Judgments, and gain the Affections of Men, to make the same Truths always please and always appear with a new and amiable Lustre; this is indeed a difficult Task. For a Man to cultivate the Principles of Vertue, and improve the Growth of it to make every subject, which he treats of to become the better for him, and to thrive and flourish under his Hands, is an Argument of true Learning and substantial Knowledge; but there is no Skill required to make the weeds of Vice grow apace; all the Art is in destroying them, and it is a sign of a little Mind when one is able to distinguish himself only by Singularity, by an odd Dress, or a new Mode, when his Wit borders upon Madness and Prophaneness, and his Learning is all out of the way. Many who are neither Heterodox in Religion, nor fond of being singular in any thing else, have shewn an extraordinary Sagacity, and a surprising variety of excellent Learning upon Sub-

jects

jects which are unusual and in themselves but little considerable. And I will not deny but that some of the Men of Singularity have no Worse Design than to gratify a little Vanity, and to appear like some body in the *Commonwealth of Learning*, as if Learning were a mere Trifle, a very Play-thing, to be employ'd to no serious and useful Purpose, but would serve only to give men occasion to talk, and to be talk'd of. This is call'd *Pedantry* and I know not why that should go under a better Name, which is of a worse Nature, and join the Trifling of Pedantry to the Mischief of Irreligion. If this Sort of Men would but busie themselves no worse than *Tiberius* did, when he examined, who was the Mother of *Hecuba*; what Name *Achilles* went by, whilst he hid himself in Womans Apparel, and what Songs those were, which the *Sirens* were wont to sing; those indeed are profound Enquiries, and so worthy of them, that it were pity they should be disturb'd in such ingenious Disquisitions. But if Men will be for removing Foundations, and rejecting established Doctrines, and denying the Principles of Religion; it is fit they should be told, that there is neither Wisdom nor Learning in this; and those who are acted themselves by a Spirit of Contradiction, have the least Reason of any Men to take it amiss to be contradicted, tho' it be in never so plain a manner. In short, it is possible that some may

may be well Skill'd in Tricks and Artifices, who know little of the substantial and useful Part of the Law, and it is certain that many who talk boldly of the highest Points of Religion, are ignorant even of *the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*. There surely can be little need for any Man to have recourse to Error and Extravagancy for the exercise and improvement of his Faculties, they must be strange Faculties to want such Improvement. Truth it self is infinite, tho' always uniform and consistent in every part, and will afford room enough for the free use of Reason, in examining and considering the Nature of things, in stating particular Cases by general Rules, in the Study of Antiquity, and in explaining particular Texts of Scriptures, according to the Analogy of Faith, and the Tenour of sound Doctrine. And it may justly be look'd upon as a Defect of Judgment and good Sense, or be suspected (which is much worse) of want of Sincerity and a good Conscience, when Men can find nothing, by which they may recommend themselves to the World, but by setting up for Novelties in Religion. For what Man of an honest Meaning, and of sufficient Abilities and strength of Parts, to proceed securely in direct and approved Paths, would run out of the way by Cunning and Artifice, to steal a despicable Reputation, which another would be asham'd of, and of which the best

thing that can be said, is, that, as it is never worth the having, so it is never lasting.

After the Reception and Establishment of the Gospel for so many Ages, we are call'd upon to prove the Grounds and Principles of our Religion all over again, and we will never decline a thing so easy to be done. But the Modern Infidels have changed the State of the Question: The Truth of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Disciples was never deny'd by the Adversaries of Christianity of old; this was not disputed by *Celsus*, *Porphyrie*, *Hierocles*, and *Julian* the Apostate; if some of them did upon any occasion insinuate the contrary, that was so malicious and groundless a Calumny, that they were neither able to insist upon any Proof of it, nor to reconcile it to what they themselves had elsewhere said. The Matter of Fact was acknowledged by the antient *Jews*, and has been confess'd by their Posterity; they could not contradict the Miracles, but denied the Consequence of them: tho' the Men we have to deal withal, to make clear work, with much Confidence, but with as much Ignorance, deny both. Let them know then, that they are in part confuted by the Enemies of our Religion; and it were strange if its Friends should fail in the other Part.

IV. I have here endeavoured to do some Right to our Religion, and to satisfy all such as are willing to be satisfied in the most difficult Points of it. And tho' I have discoursed at large upon the Subjects of which I treat, and not in the usual Method of *Objection* and *Answer*; yet I have always had my eye upon the Objections, which I have known that I could think at material. But to bring in Objections at every Turn in plain Discourses, such as these were design'd to be, as far as the Matter would permit, might have been of no good Consequence. A man may very well be guided in the right Road without having all the wrong and dangerous Paths describ'd to him; and he may be directed how to recover or preserve his Health without being presented with a Catalogue of Diseases; he may get safe to his Journeys end, without knowing all the Bogs and Precipices by which he might have miscarried; and in order to be well, there is no need that he should be acquainted how many ways there are of being sick. I have heard of some that read Objections without the Answers; as lately a shameless Writer has produced the Objections of *Celsus* and *Faustus*, against the Canon of Scripture, without taking Notice of the Answers given by *Origen* and *St. Austin*, from whom he had them. And tho' both the Objections and Answers should be read; yet Objections are commonly in few Words, and are often remembered, when the Answers

Answers are forgotten. And indeed, tho' I were never so Expert at it, I have no Ambition to try my strength in tying a knot, that I may shew my Skill in unloosing it. But to provide against all exceptions, as much as it is possible, I have proved at large, that if all Objections could not be answered, this would be no sufficient Reason to reject or question the Authority of our Religion.

I cannot say I must confess, that I have been able, or have been much solicitous to obviate all the Cavils which may have been started, many have been given up, and others seem never to have been seriously urged. An Author who had more Learning it seems, than Judgment to spare, wrote a Book to prove that there were Men before *Adam*; but this was rejected by Judicious Men as a very absurd and Ridiculous Conceit, particularly by *Grotius*, as the Author complains, who yet afterwards retracted it himself. Some notwithstanding are so fond of any Paradox that they are still for maintaining it. I confess it agrees admirably with a Tradition of the *Arcadians*, that their Ancestors were before the Moon, and if any Man should pretend, that this might very well be true, according to the *Cartesian Hypothesis*, by attempting to prove that *Arcadia* might be inhabited before the Moon of a Luminous became an *Opake Body*; in so curious an Age, he must have ill Luck if he should want his
Ap-

Applauders. If some Object, that the Originals of the Books of Scripture in the Hand-Writing of the several Authors are not still remaining; doth this deserve to be answered till they can produce the Original Writings of all other Books? Or at least of all or any that are as Antient, as even the last written of the Books of the New Testament? Would they have an Office erected to prove the Titles to all Estates by Original *Deeds*? and upon what Period of time will they fix for the Date of them, which will admit of any Comparison with the Date of the Manuscript Copies now extant of the Scriptures? Some have alleged that the Sea through which the *Israelites* passed is not Red: But they may be pleased to know that Religion is nothing concerned in what has been written on both sides upon this subject, for it is not called the *Red Sea* in the *Hebrew*, but the *Sea of Weeds* with which it abounds. It has the denomination of the *Red Sea* from the Greeks, however it came by it (for the Criticks are not agreed about it) and is best known by that Name, which is therefore made use of by the *Septuagint*, and in our own and other Translations, which herein follow *St. Luke* and the Apostle to the *Hebrews*. Men must call things by known Names if they will be understood, whatever gave the first occasion to those Names. As to many Objections let Men but do *Moses*
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the same Right, which they would do *Thucydides* or *Tacitus*, and we need desire no more, tho' they should not allow for the great distance of Time between them: Indeed they might live in the same Age, for all that many of these Objectors know and be next Neighbours. I have known divers Objections made, which the looking only into the Bible would answer, and many proceed from the want of being Conversant in it. Some have supposed that they had great matter of Objection from Christ's Cursing the Fig-tree, and causing it to wither away: But never so little Reflection might serve any one to take notice how merciful a thing it was in the Son of God, and how suitable to the Gospel which he Preach'd for him to shew his Power of punishing upon a Tree rather than upon a Man: it was then and is at any time as easy for him to punish his Revilers, as it was to Curse this Tree, or as it can be for them to Revile him, tho' they be never so ready at it: But to manifest himself to be the Saviour not the Destroyer of mankind: He Cured all manner of Diseases and raised the Dead; but never took away the Life of any Man, nor inflicted any Disease, he spared his worst Enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, and Punished their Hypocrisie in the Emblem only of a Fig-tree flourishing in Leaves before the Time and Season of Figs, and thereby promising very much an Early

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ly Fruit but having none; it made a show of Figs out of Season, but had nothing to answer so fair an Appearance.

Other Objections which may seem more considerable, have been confuted even to a Demonstration. Cavils which have been raised concerning the (*) quantity of Matter, which will be required to Compose the Bodies of all Men at the Resurrection, and concerning the (y) Bottomless Pit, have been demonstrated to be frivolous. That the (z) Capacity of the Ark was sufficient to contain Noah and his Family, with the Beasts and Food for them; and that the (a) Increase of Mankind might extend to so great Numbers in no longer a Compass of Years than the Scriptures in any Instance Assign, are things which have been often proved beyond any possibility of a Confutation; and whatever force there may seem to be in Objections of this Nature, they are to be reckoned among the *Vulgar Errors*, and in that Number Sir *Thomas Brown* has placed some of them, for Learned Men have been long ago ashamed to make them; and this, one would think, should cause others to be more Modest and Cautious in their Objections against the Scriptures, when such as have the Appearance of the greatest strength in them, being once brought under strict Examination prove to be evidently false. And if they find they have been mistaken and are willing

(x) *Traquet. Geomet.*

Pract. lib. 3. c. 20. Probl. 2.

(y) *Sir Sam Moorland's*

Urim of Consc. p. 95.

(z) *Butes de Arca Noe. Kircher de*

Arca Noe. Sir W. Raleigh.

Hist. lib. 1. c. 7. s. 9.

Bishop Wilkin's Real Character

Part 2. o. 5.

(a) *Petau's Doctr. Temp. lib. 9. c. 14.*

ling to be undeceived; this will go so far towards their Conviction that I cannot but hope that the Consideration here proposed, may be of some weight with them.

Thus far, methinks, at least I may hope to prevail upon those who will not be convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion, that they will no longer imagine it Safe or Prudent to speak lightly and profanely of it. Religion is too serious a thing, and of too great Concernment to Mankind, to be exposed to the Scorn of every one, that thinks he can make a Jest. And that which is too hard, for their Reason will be in little danger of their Raillery, but will rather receive an additional Confirmation from it. The best and most sacred things are always most Capable of Dishonour and Affronts; for to Affront and Abuse any Person or Thing is to endeavour to make it appear bad, and it is the security of some things and some Men, that they cannot be represented worse than they are. It is in any ones Power to Affront the greatest Prince, and a Man of the most eminent Vertue may be most easily abused, but no Treason can be spoke against a Beggar, and it is the hardest matter to find out how to disgrace him of whom nothing can be said worse than he deserves. It is a kind of Testimony given to Religion, and an acknowledgment paid to Vertue, when Men so industriously labour to villify it. For
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how can that be disparaged which is of no Worth or Excellency? Or why should Men endeavour to bring that into discredit, which hath not at present a confessed Reputation? Whether this be a deserved Reputation or no, they may question if they think fit, but then let them make it a serious question, and not to be decided by the loudest noise. But here is the mischief, they have no Patience to attend to the Force of an Argument, or to go on with a dispute; but a Cavil is soon started, and Objections are more easily raised than answered upon any Subject, and then they trample with wonderful Scorn, and Triumph upon that which they conceive is so miserably overcome: but alas the Victory is over themselves; nothing is either the more or the less true for their believing or disbelieving it, and Religion is always the same how profanely soever it may be spoken of.

We have no design to impose upon any Man's Faith; but if there be Reason in what we say, it may well be expected from Reasonable Men, that they should hearken to Reason. Religion is Reason and Philosophy, as the Fathers often speak, the best and truest Philosophy. And I am persuaded, how much soever I may have failed in the performance, that the Christian Religion is capable of, being proved with such clear and full Evidence, even to ordinary Understandings, as to make all Pretences of Arguing against it, appear to be as ridiculous as they are impious.

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THE REASONABLENESS AND CERTAINTY OF THE Christian Religion.

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.

Of Humane Reason.

HAVING in the former Book proved the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, I proceed in this to clear such points, as are commonly thought most liable to exception in the Christian Religion, and to pro-

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propose some considerations which may serve to remove such prejudices, and obviate such cavils, as are usually raised against the Holy Scriptures. But before men venture upon making Objections against the Scriptures, they would do well first to consider the compass and strength of their own Parts and Faculties, and to observe in how many things they daily find themselves deceived; how many men there are who understand much more than themselves, and how much folly and ignorance there is in the wisest men. Those commonly that raise objections against the Scriptures are as confident in the management of them, as if they understood all things besides, and therefore conclude, that must needs be false, which they do not understand; not considering, how very reasonable it is to suppose, that God should command and reveal many things, the Natures and Reasons of which we may not be able to comprehend. This must be granted by every man who believes God to be infinitely wise, but doth not think himself to be so, and acknowledgeth God's sovereignty over him. For as he is infinitely wise, he may reveal things above our capacities, and as he is the supream Lord and Governor of the world, he may command us what in his infinite wisdom he shall see fitting, tho we may not perceive the Reason and Design of it. And yet this is the utmost, that upon a due examination,
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many of the objections against the Authority of the Scriptures amount to, that there are several things in them, of which some men think no clear account can be given, and others, which seem to them unworthy of God.

Now what is the meaning of this way of objecting? and where lies the force of such Arguments but in this, that it is not to be conceived, that God would reveal or command any thing, with which they are not satisfied, or which they cannot perfectly understand? This is all the strength of this sort of objections. There is all the Reason in the world to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, if they did not contain things, which these men in their great wisdom think should not be there, if they were his word; which is to make their own understanding the measure and *Criterion* of Divine Revelation. And some have turned Scepticks for as good Reasons, and others have been Atheists upon the same Principles; finding as much fault with the System of the World, and the Order and contrivance of the parts of it, as the Deist doth with the Scriptures; they have renounced all belief of a God, upon the same grounds upon which he disbelieves the Christian Religion. To convince men therefore of the Narrowness and Weakness of Humane Reason, I shall shew,
I. That in some things each side of a Contradiction seems to be demonstrable. II. That every man believes and experiences several
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things which in the Theory and speculative Notion of them would seem as incredible as any thing in the Scriptures can be supposed to be. III. That those who reject the Mysteries of Religion, must believe things much more incredible.

I. In some things each side of a Contradiction seems to us demonstrable. Several instances might be given of this. I shall instance only in the divisibility of Matter. Nothing seems more evident than that divisibility is essential to Matter, and that therefore all Matter is divisible, so that the least part of Matter is as divisible as the biggest, because the least particle of Matter is Matter, that is, it is of the same Nature and Essence with the whole: and all Matter differs only in Bulk, or Figure, or Place, or Rest, or Motion. It being then of the Nature of Matter to be divisible, it must ever be divisible, tho it be never so often divided; since it can never be so divided, as to lose its own Nature, or cease to be Matter. On the other side, it is demonstrable that Matter cannot be infinitely divisible; because whatever is divisible is divisible into parts, and no parts can be infinite, because no Number can be so. For all Number is necessarily in itself capable of being counted or numbered, tho no Finite Being may be able to number it, a Numberless Number is a contradiction, it is a Number, which is no Number: therefore all Number must be even or odd,

odd, and must be capable of Addition and Subtraction, which is contrary to the Nature of Infinite. For what is less or greater has certain bounds or limits, and therefore cannot be infinite, or without any end or bounds. Matter therefore cannot be divisible *in Infinitum*, since all Division is into Parts, and all Parts are capable of being numbered, that is, they are more or fewer, even or odd. And it will not suffice to say, that Matter can never actually be divided into infinite Parts, tho it be capable of infinite Division, so as that there can be no end of its divisibility. For the Parts into which it is divisible must be actually existent, tho not actually divided: for nothing can be divisible into parts which it hath not, and all parts actually existent, whither they be divided, or only divisible, are capable of being numbered, or must have a determinate number, and therefore cannot be infinite. But to say that these Parts of Matter are indefinite, but not infinite, is only to confess, that we know not what to say of them: for they are indefinite in respect to us, not in their own Nature, we cannot determine their Number, or what end there can be of dividing them, but this is an argument of our own ignorance, and proves nothing as to the nature of the thing.

Again, nothing is clearer to every understanding, than that all the parts into which

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the whole is divided, being taken together are equal to the whole : yet it seems many ways demonstrable, that any single part is equal to the whole. I shall give but one such Proof of this, as may be most obvious. It must be granted, that in any Circle a line may be drawn from every point of the Circumference to the Center. Suppose then the Circle to be the *Æquator*, or a line drawn round the Globe of the Earth, and that ten thousand lesser Circles are drawn within the *Æquator* round the same Center, and that a right Line is drawn from every point of the *Æquator* to the Center of the Globe ; every such Right Line drawn from the *Æquator* to the Center must be of necessity cut thro the ten thousand lesser Circles drawn about the same Center, and consequently there must be the same Number of Points in a Circle ten thousand times less than the *Æquator*, that there is in the *Æquator* it self. And because there may be a Circle drawn from any point of the Diameter, the lesser Circles may be multiplied to as many as there are points in the Diameter, which are innumerable, and therefore the least Circle imaginable may by this demonstration have as many points as the greatest, that is, it may be as big as the greatest, or as big as one never so many thousand times bigger than it self. For all the Lines drawn from the utmost Circumference terminate in the Center, which proves that the Center,

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or the least Circle imaginable immediately next to it, must be equal to the Circumference never so much bigger than it. For to answer, that the lesser Circles have as many points, but not so big as the greatest, is against the supposition, because I suppose a line drawn from every one of the least points of the greatest Circle, thro the least Circle to the Center, and the least points in the greatest Circle must be as small as any in the least Circle, there being nothing in the nature of Circles or Points to hinder it, and the every Line passing from the Circumference to the Center, is supposed to be of the same bigness in all its parts, and therefore all the Points of Intersection must be equal with those in the Circumference.

This proves, that we may lose our selves in the speculation of material things : for when we once abstract them from sense, and consider them in the Theory, they become inexplicable : Because our Faculties were never designed for such speculations, and are not made for them, nor are capable of them, at least in this mortal state. But this is no Argument that our senses rightly disposed, and in due circumstances, may deceive us in things, which are the Objects of sense, or that we may be deceived in trusting to them. Because what is the object of sense, is the proper object for us to judge of by notions derived from our senses, or by the Informations which we receive from them. Our Faculties

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were designed not for meer speculation and curiosity about matters, which perhaps it is impossible for us Creatures fully to comprehend, but for our use and welfare: they were designed to prevent our being deceived in things which are the objects of sense, and therefore all the absurdities, which are charged upon the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, are truly urged, because they are concerning an object of sense; and all such Maxims, as *the part is less than the whole, &c.* must hold true, when they are applied to objects of sense, tho it be past our understandings to conceive, how they should be applicable to things, which do not fall under the perception of our senses; for these notions were implanted in us, to guide and direct us in the course of this life; and we must rely upon them, when they are applied only to their proper objects, rather than upon any speculations, which are too nice and high for our conceptions. And it is as absurd to believe what contradicts our senses in an object of sense, as to extend these Maxims to objects which are insensible and only in Idea.

The seeming demonstration of these, and such like contradictions, arises from the applying of the Maxims taken from Physical and Material things, to Mathematical Ideas, which are in the mind only, and have no existence in the Nature of things. And the same absurdities may be started upon any other

ther subject, by confounding the several Notions and Properties of things of different Natures. That the whole is greater than part of it is a Physical Axiom and obvious to sense, but that Lines are formed by indivisible Points, is purely Mathematical Speculation, and the work of Reason. So again, that Matter is divisible is an object of sense, but that divisibility is inseparable from Matter is mere speculation, and a deduction which is made from sense, of which our senses can give us no assurance, but that our Reason may be mistaken in it. And whenever we pass the proper bounds of each Faculty, and judge the of difficulties concerning the objects belonging to one Faculty, by abstracted Notions belonging to another, we must necessarily fall into error and confusion. And therefore this must needs happen, when we reason about objects, which we know only by Revelation, and which are the Natural and Proper objects of none of our Faculties.

There are proper Notions and Maxims, which belong to the several Natures and Kinds of things, and these must of necessity fail us, when they are used about things of another Nature. Thus if a man should judge of Sounds by his Ideas of Colours, or of Colours by his Notions of Sounds, he might multiply contradictions without end: and yet these are not more different than sensible objects are from insensible, and material from immaterial.

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terial. God may see it fitting to reveal such things to us, as are above our understandings, but then we must be contented to take his word for the Truth of them, and not apply our Principles and Maxims taken from things of an inferiour Nature, to things of which we can have no conception but from revelation: which would be as absurd as for a deaf man to apply the Notion which he has of Colours to Sounds, or for a blind man to fancy, that there is no such thing as Colours, because he is told they cannot be heard.

And there must be a due proportion between the Faculty and its object. For the Faculties both of our Bodies and Minds are confined and limited in their exercise about their several objects. The parts of Matter may be too small and fine to be any longer discerned or perceived by sense. For only Bodies, which are so big as to reflect a due quantity of Rays to the eye, can be perceived by the sight it self, the quickest and subtlest of all our senses. And as objects in their bulk are sensible, but are insensible in their minute parts; so it is in the inward sensations or preceptions of the mind in respect of its objects. We may puzzle and perplex our selves in the deductions, which may be made from the most common Notions. Nothing is more certain and familiar to our Minds than our own thoughts that we think, and understand, and will, we all know, but what is
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the principle and subject of thought in us, and how our understanding and will act upon, and determine each other, is matter of perpetual dispute.

The summ of this argument is, that our Faculties are finite, and of no very large extent in their operations, but are confined to certain objects, and limited to certain bounds and periods. Both our Natural and Acquired knowledge is conversant about certain kinds of objects, and our Faculties are fitted and suited to them, and from the properties and affections which we observe in them, we form Notions, and make Conclusions, and raise Maxims and Axioms. Now if we apply our Natural Notions to things which we know only by Revelation, we must be very liable to great mistakes about them. For thus it is in things not so much out of the reach of our capacities, and which are not of a spiritual Nature; if we frame speculative and abstract Ideas from the Principles and Maxims which are formed in our Minds from sensible objects, we may soon puzzle our selves, and seem to demonstrate contradictions; which demonstrates only, that all arguments of this Nature are vain and unconcluding. And therefore it must be absurd to reject the Mysteries of Religion, because they will not come under the Rules of Logick and Philosophy, when they are acknowledged to be incomprehensible, and therefore not to be judged of
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as to the *Manner* and *Nature* of them by the Rules and Principles of Humane Sciences.

What has been here alledged concerning the Contradictions about the divisibility of Matter is no more than has been generally confest by the best Philosophers and Mathematicians. And the excellent Mr Boyle having produced the Testimony of Galileo and Des Cartes upon this subject, concludes with this observation. (a) *If then such bold and*

piercing Wits and such excellent Mathematicians are forced to confess, that not only their own Reason, but that of Mankind may be passed and non-pluss'd about Quantity, which is an object of contemplation, Natural, nay Mathematical, and which is the subject of the rigid demonstrations of pure Mathematicks, why should we think it unfit to be believed, and to be acknowledged, that in the attributes of God, who is essentially an infinite being, and an ens singularissimum; and in divers other divine things, of which we can have no knowledge without Revelation, there should be some things, that our finite understandings cannot, especially in this life, clearly comprehend?

II. Every man believes and has the experience of several things, which in the Theory and Speculative Notion of them would seem as incredible, as any thing in the Scriptures can be suppoed to be. It was well observed by (b) *Quintilian*, and may be observed by any one that will consider it, that very many things

things are true, which scarce seem credible, and as many are false, which have all the appearance of Truth; and yet the cause of unbelief in matters of Religion is chiefly this, that we are hardly brought to believe any thing possible to be done, which we never saw done, and judge of things not from any principle of Reason, but from our own experience, and make this the measure of what is possible to be, not considering that many things may be altogether as possible, which we never knew done, and that we should think many things impossible, of which we have the daily experience if we had never seen nor known them to be. For what we have the daily experience of, we are apt to think very easy, and scarce suspect that there can be any difficulty in it, but frame to our selves some kind of account of it, and please ourselves perhaps with a conceit that we perfectly understand it, and conclude, that such and such things must needs come to pass, from the causes which we assign. For when a thing is common and familiar to us, we either take no pains at all to consider the nature of it, or when we do observe and consider it, being ashamed to confess our own ignorance, we persuade ourselves, that there is no such great difficulty in it, but fancy we understand the true Reason and Cause of it. And if it were not for the carelessness of some in not minding the wonderful effects of

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(a) *Considerat. about the Reasonableness of Reason and Religion, Sect 2.*

(b) *Sunt enim plurima vera quidem, sed parum credibilia, sicut falsa quoque frequenter verisimilia. Quintil. Institut 1. 4. c. 2.*

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Nature, and the Pride of others in fancying that they are ignorant of nothing, which is the constant object of their senses, I am persuaded that there are several things in the World, which we daily see and experience, that would seem as wonderful almost as the Resurrection itself, or any Mystery in Religion. The greatest Philosophers have been able to give but a very imperfect account of the most ordinary and obvious things in Nature, and if we had only a relation of them without any trial or experience, we should be inclin'd to conclude them impossible. The King of *Siam*, it is said, would not believe the *Dutch* Ambassador, but thought himself affronted, when he was told by him, that in *Holland*, Water would become so hard in cold weather, that Men or Elephants might walk upon it, and the relations of things in those Countries, would have seem'd as strange to us, if the constant report of men, who have been there, had not made them familiar to us. It was formerly disbelieved, nay absolutely deny'd, as absurd and impossible, that there could be any such place, as that which is now known by the name of *America*, or that the Torrid and Frigid Zones could be habitable: No mystery in Religion can seem more incredible to any man, than these things did appear even to Wise and Learned men, and if they had not been found to be by Navigation, they might have seem'd incredible still, for ought we can tell,

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tell, tho now we wonder at the ignorance of former times, that they should make any doubt of them, and admire how they came to lye so long unknown, for these things seem obvious, when they are once discovered, and it would be a disparagement to us, if we could not make as great discoveries at home as those do, who travel to the *Indies*. And if we will but consider a little with our selves, we shall find that we may be at least as much mistaken in our Philosophy about the things of another World, as our Ancestors were for so many ages concerning so much of this, and shall conceive it very possible, that there may be a Heaven and a Hell, tho we never spoke with any body, that had been in either of those places, and that there may be a Trinity and a Resurrection, tho we were able to give no account of them. For Nature it self exceeds our comprehension, and therefore the Divine Essence, and the Almighty Power of God must needs much more exceed it.

The motion of the Heavens, and of the Winds and Seas, the light of the Sun and Moon and Stars, the conception and birth of all Creatures, nay the growth of Corn, and of the very Grass of the Field, and all the most obvious and inconsiderable productions of Nature, have so many wonderful difficulties in the explication of them, that if we were not mightily inclin'd to flatter our selves, I am afraid we should sooner turn Scepticks, than be

be able to imagin, that we can give any tolerable account of them. For when all is done, we know just enough of them to acknowledge and admire the infinite Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God, and to be led to a stedfast belief and assurance of what he has revealed of himself, and of the World to come; that *the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead, Rom. I. 20.* How little is it, that we know of this Earth, where we live, and which we dote so much upon? For by the least calculation it is above three thousand and five hundred miles to the Center; but the Art and Curiosity of Man has never reached, according to Mr. Boyle's account, after all his enquiries among Navigators and Miners, (c) *above one mile or two at most downward (and that not in above three or four places) either into the Earth, or into the Sea: yet all Astronomers agree, as he afterwards observes, that the Earth is but a Physical point in comparison of the Starry Heaven. Of how little extent then, says he, must our knowledge be, which leaves us ignorant of so many things touching the vast bodies, that are above us, and penetrates so little a way even into the Earth, that is beneath us, that it seems confined to but a small share of the superficial part of a Physical Point.* And to shame the pride and vanity of Mankind, the chiefest discoveries in Philosophy,

(a) *Excellency of Theology, Sect. 4.*

phy, as he likewise observes, have been the productions of Time and Chance, not of any Wisdom or Sagacity. Which is a remarkable acknowledgment in a person, who has oblig'd the world with so many wonderful Improvements in experimental Philosophy.

The Circulation of the Blood has been but lately found out, and was looked upon as absurd at its first discovery; tho now what man can doubt of it? And some of the most common effects of Nature might seem as strange as any, if the frequency of them did not prevent our wonder. If (as *Maimonides* Maimoni. More Nevoch. ps 2. c. 18.) we suppose a man of never so good natural parts, so brought up as to be ignorant of the manner how the several species of Animals are preserved and propagated in the world, how many scruples might he raise to himself concerning their Conception and Formation? Might he not object, that it is impossible, that the Infant should ever live, and be nourished, and grow in the Womb? and would he not offer abundance of Demonstrations to prove, that the Natural Birth of Mankind, and of all other Creatures, is utterly impossible? Our Saviour in his discourse with *Nicodemus*, answers his Doubts concerning the New Birth, by putting him in mind that he was as little able to give an account of the Wind, and that he could not tell *whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*; implying that there is much less reason to doubt

doubt of things of a Spiritual nature, because we are able to give no sufficient explication of them, when we are thus at a loss about the most common and obvious things in the world, *Joh. 3. 8.* And *S. Paul* confutes all objections against the Resurrection by a like Argument, alledging, that as it would be intolerably absurd to deny or doubt of the growth of Corn, because it cannot perfectly be explained: so it is much more absurd to deny or doubt of the Resurrection for no better reason, since supernatural things must be more obscure and harder to be understood by us than natural, *1 Cor. 15. 36.*

Indeed Infidelity could never be more inexcusable than in the present Age, when so many discoveries have been made in Natural Philosophy, which would have been thought as incredible to former Ages, as any thing perhaps that can be imagined, which is not a downright contradiction. That Gravitating or Attractive Force, by which all Bodies act one upon another, at never so great a distance, even through a *Vacuum* of prodigious extent, lately demonstrated by *Mr Newton*; the Earth, together with the Planets, and the Sun and Stars being placed at such distances, and dispos'd of in such order, and in such a manner, as to maintain a perpetual ballance and poise throughout the Universe, is such a discovery, as nothing less than a Demonstration could have gained it any Belief. And this System

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of Nature being so lately discovered, and so wonderful, that no account can be given of it by any Hypothesis in Philosophy, but it must be resolved into the sole Power and good Pleasure of Almighty God, may be a caution against all Attempts of estimating the Divine Works and Dispensations by the Measures of Humane Reason. The vastness of the World's extent is found to be so prodigious, that it would exceed the Belief not only of the Vulgar, but of the greatest Philosophers, if undoubted experiments did not assure us of the Truth of it. We are assured by men of the best art and skill in those things, * that every Fixt Star of the first magnitude is above an hundred times bigger than the whole Globe of the Earth, and yet they appear less through the Telescopes, than they do to the naked Eye, and look no bigger than meer *Specks* or *Physical Points of Light*; and the Sun, which is some millions of miles nearer to us than the Fixt Stars, is by Mathematicians generally believed to be above an hundred and threescore times bigger than the Earth, and by the exactest calculations, is estimated to be eight or ten thousand times as big as the whole Earth, and (as *Mr Boyle* thinks) may perhaps be found to be yet much vaster by further observations. The Earth is * computed to be above seventeen millions of *German* miles distant from the Sun: And a Bullet carried with the same swiftnes that it has when it is shot out

* See Mr Boyle, of the high veneration *Asians* Intellectual owes to God.

* Huygen's Conject. concerning the Planetary Worlds, lib.

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of a great Gun, supposing it moved from the Earth to the Sun, would spend twenty five years in its passage; to move from *Jupiter* to the Sun it would require one hundred and twenty five years; and from *Saturn* thither two hundred and fifty years: and such a Bullet, by Mr *Huygens*'s computation, would spend almost seven hundred thousand years in its passage between us and the nearest of the Fixt Stars; he speaks concerning the nearness of em, and then stands amaz'd to think, *what a prodigious number besides there must be of those, which are placed so deep in the vast spaces of Heaven, as to be as remote from these, as these are from the Sun. For, if with our bare eye we can observe above a thousand, and with a Telescope can discover ten or twenty times as many, what bounds of number, says he, must we set to those, which are out of the reach even of these Assistances! especially if we consider the infinite Power of God. Really when I have been reflecting thus with myself, methought all our Arithmetick was nothing, and we are versed but in the very Rudiments of Numbers in comparison of this great summ. For this requires an immense Treasury not of twenty or thirty Figures only in our Decuple Progression, but of as many as there are grains of Sand upon the shore. And yet who can say, that even this number exceeds that of the Fixt Stars?*

The Quantity of Motion in the world is no less wonderful. For if the Earth move
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upon its own * Axis, a place situate under the *Æquator* must be carried with as swift a motion, as a Bullet shot out of a Cannon; and if the Earth stand still, and the Stars move round about it, a Fixt Star in the *Æquator* must move fifty two thousand five hundred fifty five miles in a minute of an hour; which, if not more, is at least three thousand times faster than the motion of a Cannon Bullet: and the motion of the Fluid Matter intersperst between the Earth and the Stars must be answerably rapid. And yet all these prodigious motions are so exactly proportioned and moderated, that, as that Great Philosopher observes, no Watch for a few hours has ever gone so regularly, as the whole World has been moved for so many Ages. And in the consideration of innumerable Instances of the stupendous Works of Nature, the ingenuous, says he, confess their Ignorance, and the confident betray theirs.

But if any man shall think these Calculations extravagant, (as discoveries in Philosophy are commonly thought by such as are little conversant in it) let him remember, that they are set down according to the best observations, that the wit of man, after the experience of so many Ages, has been able to make. So that whether these accounts be true or false, they shew the insufficiency of humane Understanding to examine the works of God, and do by consequence shew how
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much more incapable the wisest of men are to comprehend the Infinite essence of the Creator himself.

* Conject.
concerning
the Planets
and Worlds,
Lib. 1.

The famous Mr * *Huygens* lately mentioned, speaking of the passage and communication of Light every way, and in every point of Space through such vast Regions (which must be much more to be admired, if there be suppos'd to be a *Vacuum*, in which there can be nothing to direct or determine its Motion and regulate its Course) has these words; *all these things are so wisely, so wonderfully contrived, that it is above the power of humane Wit, not to invent or frame somewhat like them, but even to imagin or comprehend them.*

To say nothing of the strange Discoveries concerning the Formation and Contexture of the Bodies both of Plants and Animals; the innumerable little Animals, which are discovered by Microscopes in but one drop of water, and many other observations of the like nature, are so wonderful, that we might well suspect the truth of the experiments, if men of the greatest skill and integrity, as well in our own, as in other Countreys, did not agree in them. The vast quantities of water, which are continually flowing out of so many thousand Rivers into the Sea keep their constant course, and are some way so disposed of, as that the Sea and Land retain always a due proportion to each other. But the Original of the Fountains from whence those

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those Rivers proceed, and how this Circulation of Waters is made, is still matter of dispute. The concussions of Earthquakes reaching sometimes to so vast an extent, and the prodigious eruptions of Fire from divers burning Mountains in several parts of the Earth, throwing out abundance of matter in Rivers of Fire of great breadth for many miles together, seem incredible to those, who have not read and considered these things. The Veracity of the Loadstone, the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, Life and Motion, every thing in Natural Philosophy, when seriously examined, has so many inexplicable Difficulties, as would make a considerate man very modest in his Censures concerning things supernatural. For if we had been placed in another World, a Natural History of this might have seem'd as strange to us, as any thing Revealed can do now. And it must be great presumption in us, who know so little of the World we live in, to talk pragmatically of another, which we have only been told of; and to believe no more than our Sences can inform us of, when every Sense may inform us, how narrow and imperfect our Knowledge is, and that we take upon Trust, or swallow in the Gross, what we are commonly least distrustful about. And not only Nature, but even Art exceeds the Apprehensions of most men. The *Mechanical Powers* and *Motions* are wont to be mistaken for *Magick*

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by such as have not skill and experience in those matters; the performances of *Archimedes* were so wonderful beyond all expectation or belief, that the King of *Syracuse* is said to have made a Decree, to forbid any man to question whatever *Archimedes* should assert. The Force of Gun-powder might be thought incredible, if it were not so common amongst us. Not to mention, that the *Indians* took Watches for Animals, and could not imagine, how men could hold correspondence at a distance by a little piece of Paper. What man is there among the Vulgar that can conceive, how the dimensions and distances of the Sun and Stars can be taken, and how the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, and of the Satellites of *Jupiter* can be calculated? And is not the knowledge of the wisest man upon earth infinitely more surpass'd by the Divine Wisdom, than his Knowledge can excel that of the greatest Idiot?

¶ II. Those who disbelieve and reject the Mysteries of Religion, must believe things much more incredible. I. He that will not believe the Being of an Eternal God, must believe Matter to be eternal: for it is certain something must be eternal, because nothing could produce nothing; and unless there always had been something, there never could have been any thing. But this Eternal Matter must either have been once without Motion,

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on, or always with it: if it were once without Motion, then Matter must move itself, that is, Motion must be produced without any thing to produce it. If it were always in Motion, then there must have been an eternal Succession, since Motion cannot be all at once; for the very nature of Motion supposes Progression, and no Body can move in this space and the next at the same instant: for then it must be in two places at once. But all Succession of Duration is gradual, and the Degrees of it are capable of being numbred; and to suppose an Eternal Succession is to suppose an Infinite Number; that is, a Number, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be subtracted; or a Number which is no Number. Motion therefore could not be Eternal, and consequently the World could not exist from Eternity.

¶ But since there must be something Eternal, there must be something, the duration whereof is indivisible, or which has all its existence together, so as to have existed now no longer, than it had done before the Beginning of the World. For this is the notion of Eternity, that it has neither Beginning nor End: and therefore things eternal never had a less or shorter duration, than they now have, and can never have a longer after millions of Ages, than they had the first year, or day, from
whence

whence we may be supposed to begin the computation of those Ages: For a longer or shorter Duration must suppose a Beginning, from whence the computation is made; and therefore that which is eternal, and had no Beginning, can have neither a longer nor a shorter Duration, but always the same: and by consequence Time can bear no proportion to Eternity, because that which had a Beginning can bear no proportion to that which had none. Yet Eternity must coexist with Time, in all the differences and successions of it, and must be present with every part of it; that is, the Eternal Being exists in the space, suppose, of a thousand years, and a Temporal, or Created Being exists at the same time as long, and the Temporal Being becomes a thousand years older than it was, but the Eternal no older than it was before; because tho it coexist with Time, yet it has no respect to the division of it into Past, Present and Future. There is no Mystery in Religion more difficult and perplexing than this; and yet this is no more than what every one, tho he be a Deist, or an Atheist, must acknowledge to believe, if he will but consider it.

2. Whoever believes that there is a God, and yet believes no Revelation, or that the Scriptures are not by Revelation from him, must believe a God, and yet deny the Divine Attributes; he must believe that there is a God,

God *, who is not essentially just and good * * Εδαι and holy, which is in effect to believe no God γὰρ ἔδει at all, as I have proved at large in the former Book. θεδν ὄντα
καὶ ἀγαθόν
ἐπαμυναί

τοῖς διαλω λόγοι, καὶ ἀπρακτον μὲν ἀποφῆναι τὰ διαβόλου τὸν φθόνον &c. Τί δὲ ἄρα λοιπὸν ἔδει δεῖν τὸν τῶν ἔλων διμικροῦν; παρεχρήσαι κρατεῖν ἢ ὅτι ἡ γῆς τοῖς ἀκαθαροῖς δαίμοσι, &c. εἶτα πῶς ἦν ἀγαθός, εἰ μετὸν ἀμογητὶ καὶ λίαν τὰ ταῦτα δεῖν, ἔδειξέ τις ἡμᾶς ἠξίως λόγου. Cyrill. Alex. contr. Julian. lib. 8.

Much more might be said upon so copious a subject, but this is enough to make us more humble and modest, in judging of the Divine Mysteries. For shall poor Mortals, who know so little, and that little so imperfectly, presume to censure the Holy Scriptures, because they contain things, which they cannot understand? Shall he, that cannot fully explain the Nature of the vilest Insect, reject what God hath delivered concerning himself, because he doth not comprehend it? *The thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible Body presseth down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the mind, that museth upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out?* Wisd. 13, 14, 15, 16.

* But * out of the contemplation of Nature, and out of the Principles of humane * Ld Bacon's Advancement of Learning, B. 3. c. 2.

The Reasonableness and Certainty

“ Reason, to discourse, or earnestly to urge a
 “ point touching the mysteries or Faith ; and
 “ again to be curiously speculative into those
 “ secrets, to ventilate them, and to be inqui-
 “ sitive into the manner of the mystery, is in
 “ my judgment not safe : *Da fidei, que fidei*
 “ *sunt.* For the Heathens themselves con-
 “ clude as much, in the excellent and divine
 “ Fable of the Golden Chain, that Men and
 “ Gods were not able to draw *Jupiter* down
 “ to the Earth ; but contrarywise *Jupiter* was
 “ able to draw them up to Heaven. Where-
 “ fore he laboureth in vain, who shall at-
 “ tempt to draw down Heavenly mysteries to
 “ our Reason ; it rather becomes us to raise
 “ and advance our Reason to the adored
 “ Throne of Divine Truth.

CH A P. II.

Of Inspiration.

ALl the Motion of Material things is de-
 rived from God, and the best account
 which those who have the most studied the
 nature of Motion, have been able to give of
 it is only this, that it is an effect of the Di-
 vine Power manifesting itself according to
 certain Laws or Rules, which God has been
 pleased to prescribe for the communication of
 Motion from one Body to another. And it
 is at least as conceivable by us, that God doth
 act

act upon the Immaterial, as that he acts upon
 the material part of the World, and highly
 reasonable to suppose, that he concerns him-
 self with our Souls much more than with our
 Bodies. There is no doubt to be made, but
 that separate and unbodied spirits have ways of
 of conversing, or communicating their thoughts
 to one another : indeed all the communication
 and discourse, that is among men in this world,
 is properly between their Souls, which use their
 Bodies as instruments for the conveyance of
 their Thoughts and Notions from one to ano-
 and as their Bodies are more or less fit and
 serviceable to this end, so their discourse is
 more or less easily convey'd, and therefore
 Souls when they are at Liberty from these
 Bodies must have a Power to communicate
 their own thoughts in a way much more free
 and unconfi'd than in this Life ; as they
 have more knowledge in a separate state, so
 they must have fitter means to communicate it.
 And since the happiness of Heaven consists in
 the Vision of God, that is, in the com-
 munications of the Divine Wisdom and
 Goodness, God certainly can as well act
 upon the minds of Men in this mortal state,
 tho we be less capable of receiving or obser-
 ving the influences of his Spirit. Since finite
 Spirits can act one upon another, it is reason-
 able to believe that the Spirit of God, *the*
God of the Spirits of all flesh doth move and
 work upon the Spirits of Men, that he en-
 lightens

lightens their understandings, and inclines their Wills by a secret Power and Influence in the methods of his ordinary Grace. And he can likewise act upon the Wills and the understandings of some men with a clearer and more powerful Light and Force; than he is pleased to do upon others, in such a manner as to render them infallible in receiving and delivering his Pleasure and Commandments to the World. He can so reveal himself to them, by the Operations of his Holy Spirit, as that they shall be infallibly assur'd of what is revealed to them, and as infallibly assure others of it. Which kind of Revelation is styl'd Inspiration, because God doth not only move and actuate the minds of such men; but vouchsafes to 'em the extraordinary Communications of his Spirit; the Spirit then more especially may be liken'd to the Winds, to which it is compared in Scripture: for by strong convictions and forcible, but gracious Impressions he breaths upon their Souls, and infuses his Divine Truths into them. But upon those, to whom God did thus reveal himself by inward light and knowledge, he did moreover bestow a power of giving external evidence by miraculous works, that their pretences were real, and that what they spoke was not of them, but was reveal'd to them from God. This inspiration the Apostles profess to have both in their Preaching and Writings, and this evidence they gave of it.

In

In speaking of the Inspiration, by which the Scriptures were written, I. I shall shew wherein the Inspiration of the Writers of the Scriptures did consist, or how far it extended. II. I shall from thence make such inferences, as may afford a sufficient answer to the objections alledged upon this subject.

I. I shall shew wherein the Inspiration of the Writers of the Scriptures did consist, or how far it extended. And here we must consider both the Matter and the Words of Scripture. The *Matter* is either concerning things reveal'd, and which could not be known but by Revelation, or it is something which was the object of Sense and Matter of Fact, as when the Apostles testify, that our Saviour was crucify'd and rose again; or lastly, it is matter of Reason, as discourses upon Moral subjects, and inferences made from things reveal'd, or from matter of Fact. God, who is a Spirit, can speak as intelligibly to the spirits and minds of Men, as Men can speak to the ear, and in things which could not be known but by Revelation, the notions were suggested and infused into the minds of the Apostles and Prophets by the Holy Ghost, but they might be left to put them into their own ** Words*, being so directed in the use of

* Præterea scito, unumquemque; Prophe-tam peculiare quid habere, & ea lingua, eaque loquendi ratione, quæ ipsi est familiaris & consueta, ipsum impelli à Prophetia sua ad loquendum ei, qui intelligit ipsum. Maimon. More Nevoch. Part 2. c. 29.

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them, as to give infallibly the sense and full importance of the Revelation. In matters of Fact, their Memories were according to our Saviours promise assisted and confirm'd. In matters of Discourse or Reasoning, either from their own natural Notions, or from things Reveal'd, or from matters of Fact, their understandings were enlightned, and their Judgments strengthened. And still in all cases their natural Faculties were so supported and guided both in their Notions and Words, as that nothing should come into their Writings, but what is infallibly true. They had always the use of their Faculties, tho' under the infallible Direction and Conduct of the Holy Ghost, and in things that were the proper objects of their faculties, the Holy Ghost might only support and guide them, as in matters of sense and natural Reason and Memory, and in their Words and Style to express all these. But in things of an higher Nature, which were above their faculties, and which they could have no knowledge of, but from Revelation, the things themselves were infused, tho' the words in most cases might be their own, but they were preserv'd from error in the use of them by that Spirit, who was to *guide them into all Truth.*

For tho' the several Writers of the Scriptures might be allowed to use their own Words and Style, yet it was under the infallible guidance and influence of the Spirit, as
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when a man is left to the use of his own *Hand*, or manner of Writing, but is directed in the Sense and Orthography by one who dictates to him, or assists him with his help, where it is needful. *Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:* 2 Pet. 1. 21. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God:* 2 Tim. 3. 16. *The Holy Ghost saith, by the Psalmist, to day if ye will hear his Voice, Hebr. 3. 7. David saith of himself, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my Tongue, 2 Sam. 23. 2. And God is said to speak by the hand of Moses his servant, and by the hand of his servant Abijah the Prophet, 1 Kings 8. 53. 14. 18.* By which it appears, that he used the Prophets as his Instruments in revealing his Will: For as Miracles were by the immediate power of God, though wrought by the hands of men, so the Revelations were of God, though spoken or written by the Prophets and Apostles. But though God used them as his Instruments, yet not as mechanical, but as rational Instruments; and as in working their Miracles, they were not always necessarily determin'd to the place, or to the persons on whom they were wrought, but in general were guided to work them, when they were proper and seasonable; and the Actions, by which they wrought them, were their own, though the power
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that accompanied them was of God ; so in their Doctrines , they might be permitted to use their own Words and Phrases, and to be guided by prudential Motives, as to time, and place, and persons, with a directive power only over them, to speak and write nothing but infallible truth, upon such occasions, and in such circumstances, as might answer the end of their Mission, with which they were entrusted.

God promised *Moses*, when he sent him to *Pharaoh*, that he would be with his mouth, and with *Aaron's* mouth, and would teach them what they should say, *Exod. 4. 12, 15.* And our Saviour tells his Disciples, ye shall be brought before *Governours and Kings* for my sake, for a testimony against them and the *Gentiles*: But when they deliver you up, take no thought, how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, *Matt. 10. 18, 19.* And if *Moses* was inspired upon that particular occasion, and the Apostles were inspired in things which were personal, as in the defence that they made for themselves, they must much rather be inspired in their Writings, which concern the Church in all ages. *St Luke* had perfect understanding of all things from above, *Luke 1. 3.* so *Dr Lightfoot* renders it with great probability: for thus *ἐννοεῖν* is used for *ἰσχυροῦν* in many places of Scripture, *Job. 3. 3, 31. 19. 2. Jam. 1. 17. 3. 17.* And this the Church of
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Corinth expected from *St Paul*, they sought a proof of *Christ* speaking in him, *2 Cor. 13. 3.* as that Apostle tells them he did, and that not in a weak and obscure, but in a powerful and effectual manner. He writes for the same reason to the *Thessalonians*, ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord *Jesus*, *1 Theff. 4. 2.* and he distinguisheth between his own Judgment (assisted and enlightened, though not infallibly, by the Holy Ghost) and the Commandments of the Lord, or the infallible dictates of the Spirit, *1 Cor 7. 10, 12, 25, 40.* The Holy Ghost taught the Apostles all things, and brought all things to their remembrance, *Joh. 14. 26.* and guided them into all Truth, *Joh. 16. 13.* and the *Uction* from the holy one instructed 'em to know all things, *1 Jolt. 11. 20.* that is, all things pertaining to Salvation ; this is said of their Disciples, and therefore may in a more especial manner be affirmed of the Apostles themselves ; insomuch that the words themselves are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, which things also we speak not in the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, *1 Cor. 2. 13.* For they were under the conduct and influence of the Holy Ghost in the choice of every word they used, tho not so, as to be inspired with a new style and dialect ; the words themselves were not always suggested, but they were always inspired in the use of them ; and tho
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they might be permitted to chuse their own words and expressions, yet it was with this limitation, that they were never permitted to make choice of such, as would not fully and infallibly express the mind of the Holy Ghost.

And therefore 1 Cor. 14. 13. the Apostle gives this direction, *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret*; that is, let him pray, that he may have the Divine Inspiration to assist him in expressing himself in a known tongue, by which he is enabled to speak in an unknown one, and that he may be infallible in rendering that in his own tongue, which he infallibly speaks in another. Which makes it evident, that when they spoke by Inspiration in their own language, they had the Guidance and Inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the use of their words; and this was the reason why those that spoke by Inspiration in a strange tongue, durst not presume to interpret the words, which the Holy Ghost dictated to them in that tongue, so as to give them out for Divine Revelation, unless they were particularly empowered to render them in their own language with the same exactness, with which they were inspired to speak in a strange tongue. For that the necessity of praying that they might interpret, could not proceed from any inability to interpret by reason of the force and heat of the Rapture which was
upon

upon 'em, that made 'em unable to utter their conceptions in their own language, or to retain the sense of them in their minds afterwards, seems plain from verse 27. *if any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret, &c.* For if they had been acted by such rapturous heats and extasies, they could have been as little able to refrain, when the Rapture was upon them, and to remember what they had to deliver, when their course came to speak, as they are supposed to have been to remember what they were inspired to speak in one language, when they went to express it in another. Neither were they ignorant themselves of what they spoke, but when it is said *vers. 14. for if I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful*; the meaning of that is, that it was of no benefit to others, tho' he that *speaketh in an unknown tongue edifyeth himself*, *vers. 4.* Some men were inspired to speak in strange tongues with as much readiness, and more exactness than they could do in their native language; but this was insignificant to such as understood not the tongue in which they spoke. *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also, vers. 15. i. e.* I will pray by the Guidance and Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but in my own language, in which my understanding is employed, and the words are
D 3 not

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not all directly suggested to me by the Spirit (as they must be in a language which I speak merely by Inspiration) but I am only so far guided and assisted in the choice and use of my words, as to speak infallibly the mind of the Spirit, *Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, &c. verse 16.* Those who had the gift of tongues were, it seems, so puffed up with it, that they would worship God in no other but in those languages, tho' none of the Assembly understood them, and would be always unnecessarily and unseasonably repeating the Revelations, which they had received in strange languages; the Apostle tells such men that it was very improper and absurd to deliver their Revelations in an unknown Tongue, or to pray or give thanks in a Language not understood by those that heard them, but that they should pray that they might interpret, or forbear the use of the gift of tongues, unless before them who understood the Tongues in which they spoke, that it might be for edification. For in their Inspirations they were confined at certain times to some particular Language, *as the Spirit gave them utterance*; and it might have done great prejudice to the Truth of Religion, if they of themselves had ventured to render that into their own Language, which was revealed to them in a strange Tongue: and for this reason it was not permitted those, who spoke with Tongues, to speak in any but that, in which the Revelation was made to them, unless they

they were enabled to do it by being inspired with a Power of Interpretation. For *to speak with tongues* and *to interpret* were distinct gifts, *1 Cor. 12. 10, 30.* and whatever gift any one had received, he was confined to the exercise of it, and might not presume to pretend to another, which he had not received.

The gift of *tongues*, and of the *interpretation of tongues*, being so particularly distinguished, this must imply, that the Apostles (who are supposed to have had all the gifts, which others had but in part) were guided by the Spirit in their words and expressions, since those who spoke by the Spirit, were unable to interpret without a particular gift; for no interpretation was sufficient, but such as rendered the sense with infallible truth and exactness; and if this exactness of words was requisite in their Assemblies, it must be much rather necessary in the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. Among other gifts of the Holy Ghost, are reckon'd *the word of wisdom*, and *the word of knowledge*, *1 Cor. 12. 8.* the former *Grotius* understands of speaking wise sayings, and the latter of knowledge in History; and to the rest was added the gift of *discerning of spirits*, *v. 10.* And as there were several gifts, so there were several offices in the Church, *Ephes. 4. 11, 12.* Now the several gifts of the Holy Ghost were not all bestowed ordinarily upon the same person, but such as were necessary for that office and employment

ployment which he was to execute. But as the Apostolical Power comprehended in it the powers of every other office, so it was requisite that they should possess the gifts proper for the performance of whatever was to be done by them. And when God, by his providence and disposal of things, gave the Apostles and Evangelists occasions of writing upon such and such subjects, and to such and such persons, or Churches, he by his Spirit inwardly excited and assisted them in it, bestowing upon them the gifts of *Wisdom* and *Knowledge*, and of writing and speaking either in their own or any other Language, in which they were required to write or speak: For we are not to suppose that any gifts were bestowed upon others, and yet denied to them, to whom they were most useful and necessary, in order to the delivering of that Faith and Doctrine, which was to be the standing rule for the attainment of Salvation to all Christians unto the end of the world. When others had the gift of speaking and interpreting strange Languages, it cannot be conceived that the writers of the Holy Scriptures should be refused that necessary assistance in the Languages in which they wrote, that might preserve them from error; and if any, without the gifts proper for it, had undertaken any office or ministration, the gift of *discerning of Spirits* was a security to the Church from any hurt that might ensue by the pretences of such undertakers.

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We may be certain, that all the Gifts, which were bestowed for the edification of the Church, were (as far as they were needful) vouchsafed more especially to all such, as were to leave behind them for the benefit of the Church in all Ages, 'an account of the Gospel of Christ, and the terms of the Salvation to be obtained thereby; and that no such Guidance and Direction of the Holy Ghost was wanting as might preserve them from error in any particular: for there is no particular, but it will fall under some one of those gifts, which were bestowed upon the first Disciples. They were not necessarily to write in an exact and elegant style, but in such as was secured from error in whatever they delivered. To what purpose else had been so many several Gifts? To keep them from gross errors and fundamental mistakes there could have been no need of such a variety of Gifts: but when every sort of error, which men are prone to, had a Remedy provided to prevent it, we may be assured that no error was suffered in those Writings, which were the most important work of the Apostolical Function, and designed for *the edifying of the Body of Christ* not in one Age and Nation only, but throughout all Ages, and in all parts of the World.

II. I shall now proceed to make such Inferences, as may afford a sufficient Answer to the objections alledged upon this subject.

1. The

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1. The Inspiration of the Writers of the Scriptures did not exclude humane means, such as information in matters of fact, either by their own senses, or by the testimony of others; or reasoning from their own notions and observations: but the Holy Ghost guided them infallibly in the use of all such means.

2. The Inspiration of the Prophets and Apostles or Evangelists did not exclude the use of their own words and style: and as they might be permitted the use of these, so they might be permitted, or in some cases directed to use the words of others. Many things delivered in one Book of the Scriptures are likewise delivered in another, and some things are repeated in the same words, that God revealing the same things, and in the same express words, at different times, and by different persons, might make the Revelation of them the more evident and remarkable. For that, in which several inspired persons concur, is the more taken notice of, and becomes the more observed, as a thing of great weight and moment. The reason why *the Dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, was because the thing was established by God, and God would shortly bring it to pass*, Gen 41. 32. It is in this as it is in all other things, it is expedient, that in matters of great concernment, there should be the more solemnity, and that they should be the oftner repeated and the more insisted upon;

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upon; and if they be express in the same words, this implies, that those words carry more than ordinary weight in them: And therefore not only all the Divine Writers agree in the same purpose and design, and testify the same things, as to the chief points of Religion; but some Prophets have foretold the same things, even in the same words with others, as *Isai. 2. 2, 3, 4. Mic. 4. 1, 2, 3.* and several Laws and Matters of Fact are repeated in words, which are very near the same.

3. Tho some things are set down in the Scriptures indefinitely, and without any positive assertion or determination, this is no proof against their being written by Divine Inspiration. For this doth not prove, that the Penmen of those passages were uncertain and doubtful in the particulars so express, because the things were of that nature, that it was needless to speak precisely of them: As when *St John says, Jo. 21. 3. They were not far from Land, but as it were two hundred Cubits*, it cannot from hence be concluded that the Evangelist was ignorant how far they were from Land: For it was not material to his design to be more particular in a circumstance of that nature; but it was sufficient to say, that they were about two hundred Cubits off at Sea; and it is usual with all Writers to omit fractions, and insert only whole numbers, when it is not material to their purpose to insist upon every

every minute circumstance. It is ordinary with the best Writers to express things uncertainly, which they were notwithstanding thoroughly acquainted withal; and to seem ignorant of things, which they perfectly understood, but pass over as not worth the taking notice of, or not considerable enough for them to own the knowledge of them. It is a known Elegancy to say, *nescio quid*, or *nescio quem*, when the Author so speaking was not ignorant of the thing or person there meant, but either signified his contempt of the person or thing, or intimated that it was not worth his while to trouble himself, or his Hearers or Readers with a more particular relation. The * *Romans*, out of that Awe and Reverence which they had for Oaths, never spoke positively in giving evidence of things which they were certain of, and had seen themselves. And uncertain forms of Speech are observed † by *Ulpian* to have been usual thy Ancient *Greek* Authors in their speaking of things, whereof they were very well assured. It could be of no use or moment in re-

* Credo hac eadem Inductio in testimonio timuisse aut cogitasse: qui primum illud verbum consideratissimum

nostræ consuetudinis *Arbitror*, quo nos etiam tunc utimur, cum ea dicimus jurati, quæ comperta habemus, quæ ipsi vidimus, ex toto testimonio suo sustulit, atq; omnia se scire dixit. Cic. pro M. Fonteio.

† Τὸ δε Νομίζω, ὃ ἴδον ἐν τοῖς Σωκρῆτικαῖς εἰρηται, καὶ το Δοκεῖν, καὶ τὰ τοιούτα, ἔπῳντας ἐπὶ ἀμφιβόλῃς πράξεσιν οἱ παλαιοὶ, ἀλλὰ πόλλάκις καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ἀληθεύειν. Ulp. in Demost. Olynth. 1.

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lation to the miraculous draught of Fishes, to know whether the Ship were two hundred cubits, or half a cubit, or a quarter of a cubit over or under from the Land, and it is usual with *St John* to express himself in this manner, *Jo. 2. 6. 6. 10. 19. 14.*

Either then (to keep to the same instance) *St John* might know the precise distance, and for the reasons mentioned, not declare it, or, it not being of any use or consequence for us to be more particularly informed in a matter of that nature, the Holy Ghost might suffer him to be ignorant of it, if he had no other means of knowing it but by Inspiration: For the Holy Ghost assisted the Apostles and Evangelists to write infallible Truth, but not always to write every little circumstance concerning the things which they relate. Many Miracles are wholly omitted, and many circumstances not considerable or material to be mentioned, are omitted, of those Miracles which are recorded. But if nothing be related which may lead us into error, and nothing omitted which is necessary to be known, this is sufficient, and is all that can be expected in a Book, which is to be a Rule of Faith and Manners to us. It is necessary that nothing but Truth should be contained in it, but not that every Truth should be in it: for then *the world itself could not contain the Books that should be written*. Suppose therefore that *St John* did not know precisely how many cubits

bits the Ship was from shore ; what doth this prove ? That he did not know the Miracle which he there relates ? Doth it prove that he was not inspired in what he doth relate, if he were not inspired in what he omits ? If he had determined the precise distance, and had not known it, this might have discredited the Authority of his Gospel, but when he has not determined it, can this be an argument in diminution of its Authority, if he did not know what he did not profess to know ? Is it not a good Argument in confirmation of its Authority, that he would assert nothing but what he certainly knew, if in what he was not perfectly assured, he mentions no further than he knew of it ? So *St Paul* acquaints us, when he spoke himself, and *not the Lord*, which is an argument to us, that in all other cases he did not speak of himself, but the Lord spoke by him : it is a confirmation of his Integrity, that he would impose nothing upon us as of Divine Authority, which is not really so, because he that told us in any one case, that he spoke of himself, not as from the Lord, would have made the same Declaration in other cases, whenever he had written any thing without express Revelation.

4. In things, which might fall under human Prudence and Observation, there the Spirit of God seems not to have dictated immediately to the Prophets and Apostles, but only to have used a directive or conducting
Power

Power and Influence, so as to supply such Thoughts and Apprehensions to them as might be most proper and seasonable, and to keep them in the use of their own Reason, within the bounds of Infallible Truth, and of Expediency for the present case and occasion. They might be permitted to insert such things as the state of affairs required ; which tho not immediately dictated by the Holy Ghost, yet were agreeable to the end and design of his Inspiration, and serviceable to the Ministry, to which they were appointtd. There seems to be no necessity to assert, that *St Paul* sent for his Cloak and Parchments by Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that he had any immediate command or direction to salute the particular persons named at the end of his Epistles ; but only that his Doctrine was immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost : and as he might be permitted to put that into his own words, but so as never to be suffered to express it otherwise than in such a manner, as was fully agreeable to the mind and intention of the Holy Spirit, and therefore infallibly true : So in these lesser and indifferent matters, which some present occasion made requisite to be written of, he had the guidance and assistance of the Holy Ghost to prevent him from writing any thing, but what was expedient in those circumstances, and serviceable to his calling and ministry in the propagation of the Gospel.

But

The Reasonableness and Certainty

But things of an indifferent nature in themselves might become necessary as to time and place, and persons, and therefore might in some cases be of Divine Inspiration. St Paul's journeying into *Macedonia* rather than into any other Country, was in itself a thing indifferent, but the salvation of many souls might depend upon it, and therefore he was warned by Revelation not to preach the word in *Asia*, nor to go into *Bithynia*, but into *Macedonia*, Acts 16. 6, 7, 9. In like manner the Salutations of particular persons at the end of his Epistles, tho they may seem to us to be of no great importance, yet might be of mighty consideration and consequence to those who were concerned in them. To be saluted by an Apostle in so particular and solemn a manner, might revive their spirits, and encourage them to perseverance under their Temptations and Afflictions: for his Salutations include his Benediction, which was the exercise of his Apostolick Office and Authority in one great branch of it. And God himself might direct the Apostle to salute such persons for their support and comfort, and encouragement in the Faith. Besides, the Salutation added at the end of the Epistles are a confirmation of the Authority of them: the persons there mentioned were as so many Witnesses, to attest that they were genuine. For, besides the general concernment of the Catholick Church, and of the several Churches more especially,

of the Christian Religion.

to which such Epistles were written, the persons who were saluted by name in them, were more particularly concerned to take cognizance of them, and to know all the circumstances relating to them.

And St Paul's advice to *Timothy* to drink no longer Water, but to use a little Wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities, 1 Tim. v. 23. was requisite to be given in that Epistle, that it might remain recorded in the Scriptures, in confutation of that superstition, which some were guilty of in abstaining from things lawful, (and particularly from Wine) out of an opinion of Holiness in refraining from them, and of sin in the use of them.

5. That infallible Spirit which assisted and inspired the Apostles and other Sacred Writers, was not permanent and habitual, or continually residing in them, nor given for all purposes and occasions; as we may observe in St Paul, who acquaints us in some things that he had not received of the Lord what he writes. But the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed for the benefit and edification of the Church; and therefore were given in such measures, at such times, and upon such occasions, as might be useful for edification. We find that in a matter of great concernment and importance to the whole Church, the Apostles met together in Council, to decide the controversy; both, because according to our Saviours promise to them, they might

expect a more abundant effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them, when they were assembled in his name for that purpose; and because the thing in debate depended upon Matter of Fact, *viz.* that the Holy Ghost was given to the Gentiles, and therefore it was requisite that many should meet together, and testify of that matter. Besides, several that came down from *Judea* to *Antioch* had refused to submit to the Authority of *St Paul* and *St Barnabas*, and it was necessary that these men should be convinced by the unanimous and joint Authority of the Apostles, who being met in a full Council declared, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, Acts 15. 28.* that is, not only to us, but to the Holy Ghost, to the Holy Ghost as well as to us. And this was for an Example and Precedent to the Church in future Ages, to determine Controversies by the Authority of Councils.

6. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed upon men, who might have personal failings, and were *men of like Passions* with us, *Act. 14. 25. They had this Treasure in earthen Vessels, that the excellency of the Power might be of God, and not of themselves, 2 Cor. 4. 7.* But they were chosen to be Apostles and Evangelists, and therefore must be so far exempt from error in the execution of their Office and Ministry, as not to deliver false Doctrines in their Writings, which were to be read and received of all Churches in all Ages of the World; for this

this would have defeated and subverted the design of the Institution of the Apostles, and of the Mission of the Holy Ghost, and therefore this God would not suffer, tho they might be suffered to incur such failings as were no prejudice to the Gospel of Christ.

7. There being nothing asserted in the Canon of Scripture but what has some relation to the edification of the Church, tho some parts of it have a less direct and apparent tendency to this end than others; if any one passage or circumstance should have been erroneous, this would diminish the Authority of the Scriptures, and make them in some degree less capable to promote the end for which they were written. And there being so many particular Gifts, the Gift of *Wisdom* and of *Knowledge*; of *Tongues*, and of *Interpretation of Tongues*, and of *discerning of Spirits*: and so many distinct Offices, as *Apostles*, and *Prophets*, and *Evangelists*, and *Pastors*, and *Teachers*, we cannot conceive how those Gifts and these Offices could be better employed than in preserving that Book from error, which was to be the standard of Truth for all Ages; or how, if that Book had not been secured from error by them, these Gifts and Offices had answered the end of their appointment.

Thus much may suffice to prove the Scriptures to be infallible in all the parts and circumstances of them. But it may be observed,

The Reasonableness and Certainty

that if the Infallibility of the Sacred Writers had not extended to the words and circumstances, but only to the substantial and fundamental points of Religion, this of itself were enough to vindicate the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion. Nay further, if the Scriptures were written only with the same certainty and integrity that is in *Thucydides*, or in any other credible Historian (which the most obstinate and inveterate Adversary can never deny) yet even then no man without much unreasonableness cou'd reject it.

CHAP. III.

Of the Style of the Holy Scriptures.

When God reveals himself to men, he must be supposed to do it in such a manner, as is suitable to the necessities and occasions of those to whom the Revelation is made, and in such Language and Forms of Speech, as that he may be understood by those to whom he reveals himself; he may be supposed to speak in the Idiom, and in the Metaphors and Phrases in use amongst them, and to allude to their customs and manner of life, to have regard to the condition and state of their affairs, and to condescend in some measure to their weaknesses, to speak to their capacities, so as to be understood in his Laws, and to encourage and excite men to obey them. For
tho

tho the particular reason and design of every Law be not always necessary to be known, yet it is necessary that those to whom they are given, should know what the Laws are, and that they should have their Duty prescribed in such a way, as may be effectual to recommend the Practice of it to them.

The style of the Holy Scriptures is a subject which has been largely discoursed of by Mr *Boyle* and others. What I intend to say upon it I shall reduce to these Heads. I. The Grammatical construction. II. The Metaphors, and Figures, and Rhetorical Schemes of Speech. III. The Decorum, or suitableness of the Matter, or the Things themselves. IV. The Method.

I. The Grammatical construction and propriety of Speaking. It has been by many observed, that there is a great resemblance between the style of the Old Testament, and that of *Homer*, the most ancient Book we have besides; and it is likewise observable, that those things which are by some looked upon as defects in the Scripture style, as the using one Gender, or one Number, or Case or Tense for another, the putting Participles for Verbs, the Comparative or Superlative for the Positive, Actives for Passives, or Passives for Actives, are particularly taken notice of by * *Plutarch* as
excellencies in *Homer*; and he says, they were usual in Prose as well as in Verse amongst the Antients. Whatsoever Solæcisms or Impro-
prieties

† Vid.
Dan.
Heinf.
Proleg. ad
exercit.
Sac.
* Dialog.
Ciceron.
† Apud
Phot. cod.
cclxxix.

* Vid.
Schefferi
Præfat. &
Munkerii
Differrat.
in Hygi-
num.

† Mer.
Casaub. in
M. Anto-
nin. lib.
l. n. 14.

prieties of Speech are to be found in any part of the Scriptures, the like have been observed † in *Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Pindar* and *Apollonius Rhodius*, by their several Scholiasts, and in *Thucydides* by *Dionysius Halicarnassens*, and in *Tully* by * *Erasmus* and others. *Xenophon* is observed by † *Helladius*, not to be always exact in point of Grammar; which he ascribes to his Military Life, and his conversation with strangers. Many Solœcisms are found in the ancient Inscriptions, and in *Hyginus*, an Author, as it is generally supposed of *Augustus's* age, which are to be imputed rather to the custom of speech amongst the Vulgar, than to the mistake of these Authors. For in Languages so difficult as the *Greek* and *Latin* are, it was impossible but that the common people must often make great mistakes, which by degrees became customary, and were the character of the * *Low* and *Plebeian Style*: and in the *Greek* tongue they ascribed their Solœcisms to the particular *Dialect* of the people, among whom they were most in use.

The Stoicks, who were the most numerous and flourishing Sect of Philosophers in the Primitive times of Christianity, had little regard to the Rules of Grammar: for they were cautioned by their Master *Chrysippus* not to be careful about such niceties: and they are highly commended by a † great Critick for expressing their thoughts, tho commonly with words

words very proper and significant, yet in a style so free from all Affectation or Curiosity, as cometh next to the Simplicity of the Holy Scriptures.

The design of Revelation is not to teach Words but Things, and to express them in such words as may serve for that purpose; and if an improper word or a solœcism may be more serviceable to that end, it is beyond all exactness and propriety of Language. The truth is, it is a sign of a little Genius to be over-curious about words, as *Demosthenes* intimated in his Reply to *Æschines*, telling him that the Fortunes of *Greece* did not depend upon a Criticism; which *Tully* mentioning, says, it is * an easie matter to pitch upon a word spoken in the heat of discourse, and in cool blood to make sport with it. But this is at large treated of by *Longinus*; and *Seneca* speaks excellently to this purpose; † If you observe, says he, that a mans speech is too nice and critical, be sure that he has a mind taken up with little things. A

man of a great mind speaks with the less caution and exactness, whatsoever he says, he is better assured of the matter of his discourse, than to trouble himself much about words. This is the reason that so many great Authors have afforded so much work for the Criticks,

* Facile est enim verbum aliquod ardens (ut ita dicam) notare, idq; restinctis jam animorum incendiis, irridere. Cic. Orator.

† Cujuscunq; orationem videris sollicitam & politam, scito animum quoq; non minus esse pusillis occupatum. Magnus ille remissius loquitur & securius; quæcunq; dicit, plus habent fiduciæ, quam curæ. Senec. Epist. cxv.

to blame, or to excuse them, and very often to commend them for departing from the common forms. The Old Testament has nothing of this nature, but what, for ought that can now be known, was most proper in the *Hebrew* tongue, whatever it may be in others. And as to the New Testament, it is penned in such words, and in such construction of Grammar, as might render it most useful, not according to the *Attick*, or any other dialect, which was known to so few in comparison, that it was confined; as it were, to one Country, or known only to the Learned in others; but in such *Greek*, as was generally understood in the remote and numerous Nations, where that Language was spoken. For which reason so many expressions are taken from the Translation of the *Septuagint*, which was so much in use amongst the Profelytes in all parts of the world. In the Preface to the Book of *Ecclesiasticus* it is observed, that the *same things uttered in Hebrew and translated into another Tongue, have not the same force in them*; and * *St Jerom* shews, that there was a necessity of making use of such words, as were first taken from the Heathen Fables, in translating the Scriptures, which had no affinity to them: but when men speak or write, they must do it so as to be understood, unless they will do it to no purpose; and therefore must take such words as are to be had, and are intelligible to the whole Benefit they write, and they must

* Hieron.
ad Amos.
v. 8. & in
Epist. ad
Galat. 3.

must be contented too with such Grammatical construction, as well as with such words, as shall be found expedient to the end for which they write. * Sometimes again it was necessary to frame new words, to express the Propriety of the *Hebrew* Language, as *Tully* has done in his Books of Philosophy, to explain in *Latin* the terms of it in the *Greek* tongue. And in all respects men must accommodate themselves to their subject, and to the capacities of those for whom they undertake to discourse upon it.

II. Metaphors, and Rhetorical Schemes or Figures of Speech. Men differ as much in their forms and schemes of speaking, as they do in their manners or customs, or in their complexions and dispositions. Every man has something peculiar in his way of expressing himself, which is so easily distinguished by good Criticks from that of others, that they seldom fail in it, tho there can be no absolute certainty in things of this nature. And † *Photius* observing that some Orations which pass under the name of *Demosthenes*, were, by reason of the difference of style, ascribed by certain Criticks to other Authors, makes this remark, that he had often taken notice of a great resemblance in the style of Orations made by different Authors, and of as great an unlikeness in the style of those made by the same man. But the different character and manner of style in the several Countries and Nations

* Hieron.
in Galat. 1,
2.

† Phot.
cod. cclxv.

* Adsciverunt ap-
rum suis
auribus o-
pimum
quoddam
& tan-
quam adi-
patæ dicti-
onis ge-
nus. Cic.
Orator.
† Quintil.
Instit. lib.
12. c. 10.
Cic. Brut.

Nations of the world is much more easily discerned, than it can be in particular men of the same Country. The people of *Caria, Phrygia* and *Mysia* were not at all polite and neat *, says *Tully*, and therefore they loved a gross and slovenly kind of discourse, which the *Rhodians*, not far distant from them, never approved of, and the other *Greeks* liked it much less, but the *Athenians* could not endure it. † There were three kinds of style among the *Greeks*, the *Attick*, the *Asiatick* and the *Rhodian*; and *Tully* besides makes the *Asiatick* twofold. The *Attick* was close and comprehensive; the *Asiatick* was quite contrary to this, and was very lofty, figurative and copious; which some assigned to other causes, but *Quintilian* more truly thinks it proceeded from the different nature and temper of the *Athenians* and *Asiaticks*. The third kind of style was the *Rhodian*, which was of a middle nature betwixt the other two, neither so concise as the *Attic*, nor so redundant as the *Asiatick*, but was a mixture of both; the Genius of that people inclining rather to the *Asiatick*, but *Æschines* in his Banishment at *Rhodes* reformed their style, and fashioned it after the *Attick* manner, as far as the *Rhodian* Genius would admit of it.

It would be endless to make observations upon particular Authors. *Xenophon* and *Plato* have not escaped the Censure of *Longinus*; and *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, besides what hath been

been objected to them in particular, fall under the general censure, which * *Seneca* passeth upon all Authors of the greatest Fame and Merit; but he adds, that there is no certain rule for Style, which is continually altered by the use and custom of the place.

* Nullum sine venia placuit ingenium. Da mihi quem cunque vis magni nominis virum, dicam, quid illi ætas sua ignoverit, quid in illo simulaverit. Sen. Epist. cxiv.

Both the Language and Actions of the Eastern Nations, especially in the earlier ages of the world, had something more vehement and passionate in them, than those of these Western Countreys. The Stiles and Titles of their Kings are a remarkable instance of this; witness that of *Sapores* *, *Rex Regnum Sapor*, *particeps siderum, frater Solis & Luna Constanti* *Cæsari, fratri meo, Salutem plurimam dico*. And they retain the like Titles to this day; † the Grand Signior's is in some things the same, in others more extravagant; he is stiled, *God on Earth, the Shadow of God, Brother to the Sun and Moon, the Giver of all Earthly Crowns*. The King of * *Æthiopia* calls himself, *the King at whose Name the Lyons tremble*.

The *Romans* themselves, who used greater modesty of style, and more gravity in their actions than many other Nations, practis'd divers things in their Orations and Pleadings, which amongst us would be very strange and absurd. Thus † *C. Gracchus*, a great and popular Orator at *Rome*, was wont to have one

stand

* Ammi-
an: Mar-
cellino.
lib. 14. c.
† Ricant's
Hist. lib. 1.
c. 2.

* Letter of
David, K.
of Æthiop.
in Geddes
Church
Hist. of
Æthiop.

† Lic. de
Orat. lib.
3. Quin-
til. insti-
tut. lib. 1.
c. 10.

stand behind him with a Flute, to give him the true Key, to which he was to raise his voice; which would go near to make the best Orator amongst us ridiculous. It was customary likewise with the *Romans*, to use all arts to raise the passions, by Actions and Representations as well as by Words: * Sometimes they would hang up a Picture, representing the Fact about which they were to speak, and the Accusers were wont to produce in open Court a Bloody Sword, or the Garments of the Wounded, and the Bones, if any had been taken out of their Wounds, or to unbind the wounds, or shew the Scars. † *Quarum rerum ingens plerumque vis est, velut in rem presentem animos hominum ducentium*, These and other things more strange to us, were practised by the most famous Orators of their times amongst the *Romans*, by which they spoke to the eyes, as it were, of their Hearers, and therefore these may well be reckoned amongst the Figures and Modes of Rhetorick, whereby they gained upon the affections of the people *.

Tully tells us of himself, that he took up a Child sometimes, and held it in his arms to move compassion; and that † when *M. Callidius* had accused *Q. Gallius* of an attempt to poison him, and had made it out by clear proof, he urged this as a sufficient objection against all that *Callidius* had said, that he had not expressed any passion in his pleading, he had not smote his Forehead, nor his Thigh,

nor

* Cic. pro
P. Sextio.

† Quintil.
ib. lib. 6.
c. 1.

* Cic. O-
rator.

† Nulla
perturba-
tio animi,
nulla cor-
poris;
frons non
percussa,
non fe-
mur pe-
dis (quod
mini-
mum est)
nulla sup-
pletio.
Cic. Brut.

nor (which was the least thing he could have done, if his accusation had been true) he had not so much as stamp with his Foot. *Callidius* had all the accomplishments of an Orator, but this of moving the passions by such means; and the want of this was looked upon as a very great defect in him. Upon the death of the two *Scipio's* in *Spain*, when the signal of Battle was given by the new General, * *Livy* describes the *Roman Army* weeping, and knocking their heads, and throwing themselves upon the Ground. And what could a Speech at any time have availed with such men, that had been delivered in a cold and unaffecting manner? † *Cesar* himself wept, and rent his Garment in a Speech which he made to his Souldiers, as soon as he had past the *Rubicon*. Whoever observes their Orations, would think that the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* had tears more at command than men now have: for the Orators wept as freely upon every occasion, as if that were true of them all, which *Æschines* * laid of *Demosthenes*, that it was easier for them to weep, than for others to laugh. And sometimes not only the Orators themselves, † but the Judges of the whole Auditory were all in tears. The great art of Oratory consisted in Action, (by which is to be understood both the voice and gesture) as *Demosthenes*, that best knew, declared, and therefore though nothing were more

* Liv. lib.
25. c. 38.

† Suet.
Jul. Caf.
c. 33.

* Æschin.
contr.
Etesiph.

† Cic. pro
Plancio.
Pro Mi-
lon. Pro
Rabirio.

more common than for Historians, and Poets, and Philosophers to read their works to the people, yet the Orators seldom read their Orations; however, * Tully sometimes did it. And from the time that Augustus read his Speeches, which he had occasion to use in the Senate, or to the People or Souldiers, it grew into a custom by his example and encouragement, and so continu'd.

* Recitetur oratio, quæ propter ejus magnitudinem dicta de Scripto est Cic.

Pro Plancio. Ac ne periculum memoriæ adiret, aut in ediscendo tempus absumeret, instituit recitare omnia. Suet. in August. c. 84. vid. ib. c. 89. Quamquam Orationes & nostri quidam & Græci lectitaverunt. Plin. lib. 7. Epist. 17.

† Qua (translati- one) frequentissime Sermo omnis utiter non modo urbanus, sed etiam Rusticorum: Siquidem est eorum gemmare vites, sitire agros, lætus esse segetes, luxuriosa frumenta. Nihil horum earum audacter, &c. Cic. Orator.

* Joac. Kuhnii observat. ad Diog. Laert.

The common † Forms of Speech even among the Roman Country-men, were so Metaphorical, that they will scarce bear a literal version into our Language. And the Philosophers themselves had customs which may seem very odd to us: it * was a custom among them when they propounded a question, to offer with it a dried Fig, and he that accepted of the Fig, thereby undertook to answer the question.

cu-

customary thing in those Countreys to rend their Garments, to pluck off their Hair, to go barefoot, and cover their faces, in time of grief and trouble, which would be looked upon as a certain sign of distraction amongst us, but was commonly done by the gravest and wisest men in these parts of the world. And the expressions of their Joy and other Passions, were proportionable to those of their sorrow. Now it was reasonable, that the Prophets in delivering their Prophecies should accommodate themselves both in their words and actions, to the people to whom they were to be delivered: For else they would never have been regarded, or would have made little or no impression upon their minds, which caused the false Prophets to take the same method, 1 Kings 22. 2.

It is * Origen's observation, that the Prophets sometimes had matters of small importance revealed to them, as when Samuel acquainted Saul, that the Asses were found, 1 Sam. 9. 20. that they might keep the people from going to false Prophets to be satisfy'd in such things; besides that, by this means they gained authority to be rely'd upon, when they had affairs of the greatest consequence to foretel. And there was reason, that in every case, they should make all necessary allowances for the infirmities of the people with whom they had to do, and should use all fitting compliances with them,

that

* Origen. contr. Cels. lib. 1.

that they might the more prevail with them for their good.

* Hier. in Abdiam. It is the custom of the Prophets, as * St Jerom observes, when they speak against *Babylon*, the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, the *Philistines*, and other Nations, to use many expressions and idioms of the language of the people concerning whom they speak. † One who was as conversant in the *Jewish* Learning as most men have been, tells us, that their Books abound every where with Parables, that Nation inclining by a kind of natural Genius to this sort of Rhetorick. And it is to be considered, that several things, which are set down as Matter of Fact, might not be actually done, but only represented as done, to make the more lively impression upon the Hearers and Readers, who well enough understood, that it was not necessary, that these things should be actually performed; but they might be only parabolical descriptions or representations of Matter of Fact, the better to illustrate and convey those commands and instructions to their minds, which were to be delivered. Thus * St Jerom and *Maimonides* understood *Ezekiel's* lying on his side for three hundred and ninety days, and *Hosea's* marrying an Adulteress, only as Similitudes, or Parables and Figures of Speech; and thus from the Ancient *Rabbins*, they interpret both what is related of these two Prophets, and that which is said of *Jeremiah's* hiding his Girdle in *Euphrates*. This

was

was the most intelligible and effectual way that could be made use of to a people, among whom such figurative expressions were usual, and known to mean no more than what they were intended for. So *Jeremiah* is said to be * set over the Nations, and over the Kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant, Jer. 1. 10. because he was appointed to prophesie of all these things. *Ezekiel* speaks of himself as coming to destroy the City, because he prophesied that it should be destroyed, *Ezek.* 40. 3. and the same Prophet in his description of the City and the Temple, has delineated the Temple larger than all the earthly *Jerusalem*, and *Jerusalem* larger than the whole land of *Canaan*, to shew the *Jews* the necessity of understanding him in a mystical and spiritual sense; † as one has observed, who very well understood the dimensions of both. And thus *Ezekiel* was also carried from place to place in *Vision* only, as the Text seems to express, *Ezek.* 11. 1. 40. 1, 2. as the *Jews* * in *St. Jerom's* time understood it, and as the *Chaldee* Paraphrase interprets it. But *Hosea* might be commanded either in vision or in reality to marry a woman who had been an Adulteress, but † afterwards became chaste and vertuous;

interim, ut sequamur historiam, si meretricem, converterit ad pudicitiam, sed potius laudandus, quod ex mala bonam fecerit id. Comment. in Hof. c. 1.

* Sic dicuntur Historici eos occidere, quorum eadem narrat. Calaub. comment. ad Theophrast. charact.

† Lightf. prospect of the Temple. ch. 11.

* Hier. Praef. in Dan.

† Nec culpandus Propheta

† Nec culpandus Propheta

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thereby to set an example to the *Israelites*, who had *gone a whoring after other Gods*, that if they would forsake their false Gods, and return to the true God, the God of their Fathers, he would still accept and receive them, in like manner as the Prophet had took an Adulteress to wife, upon assurance that she would prove faithful to him. However this be understood, these actions, and others of like nature, are to be look'd upon no otherwise than as the style of Scripture, or as certain ways of expressing the Divine Will to men. For the mind may be express'd by * Actions as well as by Words, and whatever Actions were perform'd with this intention, properly come under the notion of style, or different ways and modes of expression; and all objections made against them under any other notion, proceed upon a mistake, and can be of no force.

* Est enim Actio, quasi corporis quædam eloquentia. Cic. Orator.

† Comment. in Apocal. Part. 1.

The Prophetick schemes of Speech which seem most strange to us, were usual with the Eastern Nations, † as Mr *Mede* shews of the *Indians*, *Persians* and *Egyptians*. The *Revelation* of St *John* chiefly consists of allusions to the Customs, and History, and Notions, and Language of the *Jews*, as he and Dr *Lightfoot* have shewn in many places, which are most contrary to our manner of speaking. And some passages allude to the customs of other Nations, well known and practis'd at that time. Thus the Slaves were wont to have their

their Masters Name or Mark upon their Forehead, and the Souldiers to have the name of their General upon their Right hand; and the like marks were wont to be received by men, in token that they had devoted themselves to their Gods: from whence we read of the mark of the *Beast* received by his Worshipers, *in their right Hand or in their Foreheads*, * *Rev.* 13. 16. and of his *Fathers* * *Vid. Grot. ad loc.* Name written in the Foreheads of those, that stand in Mount *Sion* with the Lamb, *Rev.* 14. 1. St *Paul* alludes to the *Grecian Games* in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, who were much addicted to those sports, and had one sort of them, the *Isthmian*, perform'd among them, *1 Cor.* 9. 24, 25. and he alludes to the distinction among the *Romans*, between Freemen and Slaves: For which he gives this reason, that it was in condescension to them, *I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh*, *Rom.* 6. 19. *Melchisedec* is said to be *without Father, without Mother, without descent*, *Heb.* 7. 3. because his Pedigree is unknown; which was a most significant way of expression to the *Jews*, who were so careful and exact in their Genealogies. But the very same manner of expression is also used † by † *Patre Livy, Horace and Seneca* upon the like occasions. *nullo, matre serva. Liv. lib. 4. c. 3. —*

nullis majoribus ortos Horac. Serm. lib. 1. sat. 6. — duos Romanos Reges esse quorum alter Patrem non habet, alter Matrem. Nam de servij Matre dubitatur: Anci Pater nullus; Numæ nepos dicitur. Senec. Epist. c. 8.

There is much of Nature, but very much likewise of Use and Custom, in the several Schemes and Forms of Rhetorick. We meet with a sudden change of the Person speaking, *Jer.* 16. 19, 20, 21. 17. 13. and with interlocutory discourse, *Isa.* 63. and many places of Scripture are obscure to us, for want of distinguishing the Persons who speak: Thus for instance, *Jer.* 20. 14. the Prophet seems transported abruptly, from one extrem to another, but if they be the words of the wicked (mention'd *ver.* 13.) under the divine vengeance, from the 14th *ver.* to the end of the Chapter, the sense will be more easy. This abrupt change of the Person is taken notice of by *Longinus*, as an excellency in *Homer*, *Hecateus* and *Demosthenes*; and the want of distinguishing the Persons speaking, has been a great cause of misunderstanding the Scriptures, * as *Justin Martyr* and *Origen* observe.

* Justin.
Apol. 2.
Origen.
Philocal.
c. 7.

Many Instances of the like nature might be given in the best Heathen Poets. And the reading the ancient Poets, is the best help for the understanding all other Authors of great Antiquity; for the ancients any Author is, the nearer his stile comes to Poetry. The first design of Writing was to delight, so as to be the better able to instruct, which made Verse much more ancient than Prose, and tho' it be natural for Men to speak in Prose, and not in Verse, yet it seems the humour of *Greeks* would not bear the writing Philosophy

ophy in Prose till the time of *Cyrus*, for then * *Pliny* tells us *Pherecydes* first wrote in Prose, which must be understood of Philosophy, for he ascribes the first writing of Prose in History to *Cadmus Milesius*. And the ancient Writers now extant in Prose, *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, and *Xenophon* have many Expressions, which are seldom or never met withal besides, but in the Poets. *H. Stephens* made a Collection of the Poetical words used by *Xenophon*, which is prefix'd to his Works. And the Orators both among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were as exact and curious in the Feet and Measure of their Prose, as the Poets could be in Verse. Great part of the Scriptures is in Verse, and the different way of writing in different Ages and Nations, appears in nothing more, than in the several sorts of Poetry. That way of writing all Verse in Rhime, which in these parts of the World is most in use and esteem, would have been ridiculous to the *Greeks* and *Romans*: Tho' the use of Rhime in Verse is so far from being example in Antiquity, that it is perhaps the most ancient of all ways of writing Verse. Acrosticks, tho' of no esteem, and little us'd in many Ages and Countries, are of great Antiquity. Verses composed in the Acrostick and Alphabetical way, were found to be a help to the Memory, and this benefit, and the ornament which it was then supposed to give to Poems, is the cause why it is sometimes used in the Scriptures: and sometimes the In-

* Plin.
Hist. Lib.
5. c. 29.
7. c. 56.
vid. Har-
duin. ad
loc.

piration was so strong upon the Writers mind, as to interrupt the Art and Method, which he had proposed to himself, as *Pf. 25.* and *145.* or perhaps it might be customary upon certain occasions to omit some Letter in the Alphabet in such compositions, for reasons which we are ignorant of, but which might be very satisfactory and agreeable to the sense of those Times and Countries. * The $\alpha\sigma\tau\gamma\mu\theta$ is an example of this among the *Greeks*, used by *Pindar* and other ancient Poets: The old \dagger *Spartan*, *Dorick* and *Æolick* Dialect changed α into P, the rough sound of this Letter being more agreeable it seems to those People; and if any of them had written Acrosticks and Alphabetical Poems, α would have been omitted. Rhophalick Verses, which begin with a Monosyllable, every word encreasing by one syllable more than the former, are to be found in *Homer*: and the *Leonine* or Monkish Verses with a double Rhime, one in the middle, and the other at the end, are not without precedent: To say nothing of the Poems composed of divers sorts of Verse, and framed into the shape of several things by *Simmias Rhodius*, some of which are ascribed to *Theocritus*. The Repe- titions so frequent in *Homer*, were not for want of words, (for no Author ever wanted them less than he) but out of choice, though latter Poets have not thought fit to imitate him in this, and *Martial* turn'd it to Ridicule. It is certain that nothing is more various, than the

* Athenæ.
lib. 10.
c. 21.

† Casaub.
in Athen.
lib. 8. c. 11.

the Wit and Fancy of Man, and it is as certain, that whoever would write to any purpose, must write in some such manner, as the temper of the people, to whom he writes, will bear, and as their customs require.

But before I leave this particular, it may be proper to consider the stile of Scripture, in the Metaphorical and Figurative use of words, in speaking of the Works and Attributes of God. There never was any Book written in a strict and literal propriety of words, because all Languages abound in Metaphors, which by constant use become perhaps better known to the Natives of a Country, than the original words themselves, and in process of time often cause them to be quite laid aside. But then this borrowed and Metaphorical sense of words may be very strange to Men of other Countries, especially when they are taken for things peculiar to the place, where they are used. The *Horn of the Son of Oyl* signifies in our way of expression a very fruitful Hill, *Isa. 5. 1.* and *Horn* signified strength in the *Hebrew* Tongue, as familiarly, as *Robur* or *Oak* signifies the same in *Latin*.

And not only the Valleys are said to shout and sing, *Pf. 65. 13.* but the best Fruits in the Land, are in the *Hebrew* called the singing of the Land, *Gen. 43. 11.* The word *Rock* is often used to denote the Almighty Power of God, and by the *Septuagint* and vulgar *Latin*, is sometimes translated *God*. For their Rock is

not as our Rock, even our Enemies being Judges, Deut. 32. 31. those versions render it *their Gods*, and *our God*, and in like manner, v. 4, 15, 18. Ps. 31. 3. 73. 26. *Is there any God besides me? yea there is no God, I know not any*, Isai. 46. 8. in the Hebrew it is, there is no Rock, as the Margin of our Bibles remarks.

This use of Metaphors ariseth partly from the likeness that is perceiv'd between things, which makes one thing to be express'd by another, and gives a delightful illustration to the things discours'd of, and partly from our want of fit words to express the various natures of things, especially of things spiritual, which we commonly speak of in Negative terms, and rather deny, that they are like things sensible, than positively affirm what they are: Thus we say that they are immaterial, invisible, incorruptible, &c. And when we speak positively of them, we must use such words, as sensible objects can furnish us withal, since we can have no other; for we understand their Nature so imperfectly, that we are not able to frame a Language on purpose to express it; and he who should go about such a work, would neither be understood by others, nor well known what he meant himself. But of all Beings, God himself is so far above our comprehension, that we can never speak of him in expressions suitable to his Divine Nature, and therefore when true conceptions are had of him, it is fittest to speak of

of him in such terms, as many serve to raise and preserve in us a due sense of Gods Honour, and of our duty to him. The Reasons then, why God is often spoken of in the Scriptures, after the manner in which we are wont to speak of men, may be reduced to these particulars.

1. The use of Metaphorical and Figurative expressions is usual in all Languages, and no Language is sufficient to set forth the Majesty and Attributes of God.

2. The peculiar Nature and Genius of the Hebrew Tongue, inclined or constrained the Writers, in that Language, to express themselves in this manner, Gen. 9. 5. *at the hand of every Beast will I require it*, that is, I will require it of every Beast. *Sin* in the Hebrew signifies a *Sin-offering*, as it is translated, and must of necessity be understood in many places of Scripture, and in this sense Christ was made *sin for us*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. We read Jos. 24. 27. that *Joshua said unto all the people, behold this stone shall be a witness unto us. For it hath heard all the words of the Lord, which he spake unto us, it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God*. This might have been a very improper and unintelligible Speech to another people, but was most significant and emphatical to the people of *Israel*, who well understood upon what account sense was often ascribed to inanimate things, as Gen. 31. 52. Num. 20. 8. Deut. 4. 26. 30. 19. 32. 1. and af-

afterwards frequently by the Prophets.

3. An express Law was made against the worshipping of God under any Image or Similitude, and the people are put in mind, that they *saw no similitude*, but only *heard a voice*, when the Lord spake to them from the Mount, *Deut. 4. 12.* and that he is without change or repentance, *Num. 23. 19. 1 Sam. 15. 29. Malach. 3. 6.*

4. When this caution had been given, and such a Law made, it cannot be expected, but that the Divine Writers should make use of such expressions, as were commonly used, and were as commonly understood in a Metaphorical or improper sense, when applied to God; to give the more force and emphasis to their discourse, * *Maimonides* has proved from the propriety of the *Hebrew* words, that the *Image* and *Likeness* of God, in which man is said to have been made, is to be understood of the faculties of his Mind; and he lays this down as a general and known rule amongst the Jews, *Loquitur Lex secundum linguam Filiorum hominum*, and he likewise observes that both *Onkelos* and *Jonathan* have in their Paraphrases taken care to give the true sense of such expressions, as seem to imply any thing corporeal in God. The Scriptures make mention of his eyes, and hands and feet, to express the effects of those Actions, which are performed by men with these members: and when it was said, *it repented the Lord that he had*

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* Maimonid. More Nevoch. Par. 1. c. 1, 26, 27, 28, 35, 48.

made man on the Earth, and it grieved him at his heart, Gen. 6. 6. This was well understood to mean no more than that God acted, as men are wont to do, when they change their minds, and repent and grieve at what they have done, and that he would certainly destroy the world which he had made: for *Moses* himself instructs the Children of *Israel*, that God is without any bodily shape or substance, and therefore cannot be said to have any heart, or to be grieved at his heart in the same sense, that it is said of men. And *Num. 23. 19.* it is declared, that *God is not a man, that he should lye, neither the Son of man, that he should repent.* And when God says that *it repented him that he had set up Saul to be King, 1 Sam. 15. 11.* this is explain'd *v. 29.* where we read, that *the strength of Israel will not lye, nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent:* and yet again in the last verse it is said, that *the Lord repented, that he had made Saul King over Israel.* The most careless writer could not so soon and so often forget himself: but what is said of Gods repenting, is to be taken in an improper and figurative sense, to imply that God would act in that case, as men act when they repent of what they have done, tho without any change of mind, or any grief, or other passion in him attending it: the effect was the same as if God had repented, and therefore by a *Metonymy* the effect is express'd by that which in men

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is wont to be the cause of such effects, tho' repentance was not the cause of it; but the reason and state of the case, which he had fully known and considered from all eternity, and therefore could not be surprized, or moved to any alteration of Judgment by it. *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, Judg. 10. 16. or, it was *shortned*, as the Hebrew word is literally translated in the Margin, that is,

* Maimon. More Nevuch Part 1. c. 47, 47. Part 3. c. 24.

† Non enim aliquid ignorat Deus, ut examinando cognoscit, sed sciat Deus, ita dixit beatus Job, ut scire alios faciat, secundum illud: tentat vos Deus Dominus, ut sciat, utrum diligatis eum, id est, ut scire ceteros faciat. Hieron. in Job. c. 31, 6.

according to * *Maimonides*, the Lords mind was shortened from afflicting them, or he had no longer a mind to punish them. When God is said to see, the meaning is, that he knows what is done; when he is said to hear, this signifies, that he understands what is said. † *Now I know that thou fearest God*, Gen. 22. 12. that is, now I have had the proof of it, and have

made it evident, that I know it. *To prove thee, to know what was in thine heart*, Deut. 8. 2. is the same, as to make that appear, and become known, which I know to be in thine heart, Gen. 11. 5. the Lord is said to *come down to see the City and Tower of Babel*, and Gen. 18. 20. *Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see, whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know*: which implies, that God is not forward

ward or willing to punish, but that he proceeds as men do in things about which they use most care and deliberation. God is represented as a good Governour, who is unwilling to believe ill Reports, and will make a full enquiry and inspection into the case, before he punish offenders; or in short, here is an illustration in Fact of that adorable character, which God proclaims of himself, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth*, Exod. 34. 6. God says, that he could not destroy *Sodom* till *Lot* was escaped out of it, Gen. 19. 22. and to *Moses* he says, *Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*, Exod. 32. 10. But we must not imagin that the Reasons and Motives which *Moses* there represents to God in his prayer in behalf of the people of *Israel*, could prevail more with him, than his own infinite Wisdom and Goodness, or that he could not have preserved *Lot* in the midst of *Sodom*, as well as he delivered *Shadrach, Meshach* and *Abednego* out of the Fiery Furnace. But these things are thus exprest for an encouragement in Righteousness, and to teach us dependance upon God; for the righteous have power with God as well as with men, and shall prevail, Gen. 32. 26. It was an exercise and trial of the Faith and Charity of *Moses*, and is proposed as an example of Faith and Charity to all, who should

should read that account of him. Besides, he was a Type of Christ, and as such, was to make intercession and attonement for the sins of the People, *Exod.* 32. 30. For Christ before his coming in the Flesh exercis'd his Mediatory power, as to the visible administration of it, by those who were appointed to be his Types and Representatives here upon Earth, which may give a satisfactory account of that power, which *Abraham, Jacob and Moses*, and others are said to have had with God.

The summ of all is, that to give the more Force and Life to the Discourses of the Prophets, and to render them the more effectual to the ends, for which they were designed, God, who is by the infinite excellency of his Nature, uncapable of any Passion, is pleas'd to be represented as subject to Love, and Anger, and Hatred, and all the Passions of Humanity; and He, who knows perfectly all events from Eternity, is contented even to seem sometimes to doubt of the effects of his designs and proposals, and of the events of humane Actions; to shew, as * *Origen, St. Jerom* and *Theodoret* have observ'd, the freedom of Men, and to declare, that their destruction is from themselves. He speaks to us in the Language of Men, and assumes to himself all the Passions of humane nature, that by any means sinners may be perswaded to turn to him; he is described as angry, and grieved at the sins of Men, and as one, who rejoyceth at their Repentance:

not

* *Origen Philocal. c. 23. Hieron. & Theodoret. ad Ezek. 11. 5.*

not that the Divine Nature can be capable of Anger, or Grief, or Rejoycing, which imply change and imperfection, and therefore must be impossible in the most absolutely perfect Being: but because Men are wont to be angry, when they punish, and to be grieved when those do amiss whom they would have do well, and are wont to rejoice when they begin to reform; therefore to set forth, that God will certainly punish unrepenting Sinners, and receive the returning Penitent, and reward the Righteous, both the Goodness and Justice of God are explain'd in such terms, as may most move and affect Men, to shew that the punishments he inflicts, will in the end be as grievous, as if he receiv'd some loss and disappointment by the obstinacy of the Wicked; and that he will as bountifully reward the Good, as if they had done him some great benefit and kindness, and had made some addition to his own Joy and Happiness, which is infinite and eternal, and therefore uncapable of any.

3. The *Decorum* or suitableness of the matter in the stile of Scripture. This is to be considered with respect to the Persons, the Occasion, and Time and Country; the Rules of Decency being variable according to Circumstances, not fix'd and immutable, as the Precepts of Morality are. * *Maimonides* has observ'd, that the Holy Tongue has no words to express things obscene: and 'tis very remarkable

* *More Nevoch. Par. 3. c. 8.*

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markable, that in those ruder Ages (as they are commonly reckon'd) the *Hebrews* had peculiar forms of Decency in their Expressions, upon all occasions which required them. And to *know* in that signification, which it hath *Gen. 4. 1.* and in many other places of Scripture, was likewise used by the *Greeks*, and is

* Hermog. de Invent. lib. 4. c. 11.

† Vid. Athenæ lib. 1. c. 4. cum Casaub. Animad. De Antiquis illustrissimus quisq; Pastor erat, ut ostendit Græca & Latina Lingua & veteres Poetæ. Varro de Re Rustic. lib. 2. c. 1.

* Herodot. 6. c. 137.

particularly taken notice of by * *Hermogezes* for the modesty of it. We find the Heroes of † *Homer* employ'd in as mean Offices as the Patriarchs, and * *Herodotus* declares, that in Ancient Times, the *Greeks* had no Servants, but did their own work themselves, or had no other help but that of their Children;

and 'tis reasonable, that their manner of speech should be suitable to their way of living, and that the one should have no more of delicacy in it than the other; and if there be any thing in their Writings, which is not so agreeable to the niceness of latter Times, it is an argument of their innocence and purity, and of a native simplicity of manners, void of Pride, and of shame arising from Guilt.

In matters of History, several things may be mentioned, not so much for their own sake, as because they were memorable in those times, and might help to keep up the Remembrance of other things more considerable. If *Moses* has related, who *found the Mules in the Wilderness*, (for the original word is capable of

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of the Christian Religion.

a different signification) * *Homer* has made the same observation. The characters and speeches of persons in the Scriptures are exceeding natural, and discover all the unaffected and imitable marks of Truth. They are short, and contain such circumstances and thoughts as are not far fetcht, but arise from the matter in hand, and have manifest influence upon the actions themselves. This may be seen in the History of *Joseph* and his Brethren, and in several other passages, which are so naturally related, that in some of them the manner of Relation, which manifestly speaks the truth of what is delivered, has given occasion to the cavils of such as have not well considered it. *Saul* enquired of *Abner*, whose Son *David* was; *Abner* answered, he did not know; *David* was brought to *Saul*, who asked him the same question, 1 *Sam. 17. 55, 58.* yet *Saul* had sent to *Jesse* for his Son *David* to play before him upon the Harp, 1 *Sam. 16. 19.* *Grotius* imputes this forgetfulness to the Distemper which *Saul* then laboured under, and to the multiplicity of his affairs. But was it ever expected of any King, that he should remember the names of the Fathers of all his Servants? *Jesse* was an obscure man, and *David* had not then been so much taken notice of, as that his Father's name should be known in *Saul's* Court, and *Abner* being absent with the Army, might never see *David* nor hear of

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him before. In the Relation of *Saul's* Death, the Messenger who brought the news had declared himself to be an *Amalekite*, yet *David* afterwards enquires of him, *whence art thou?* But nothing could be more natural than for a man in that consternation to ask that question so soon after, 2 *Sam.* 1. 8, 13. Some have alleged, that they could conceive no reason for that passage concerning the Arrows which *Jonathan* was to shoot, to give *David* notice whether he were to go or stay, because tho he did shoot in that manner, which by agreement was to be a sign to him that he must be gone, yet they met and discoursed together upon the place, after *Jonathan* had sent his Servant away. But it seems they had a more favourable opportunity than they expected of conversing there: and tho this happened beyond expectation, yet the Sacred Historian is so punctual as to acquaint us with that sign which was given by an agreement made between *David* and *Jonathan*, when they supposed that it would not have been safe for them to come to one another, 1 *Sam.* 20.

There is no nicer subject than when a man is forc'd to speak of himself: Truth, if it be to his own praise, will be rejected as falshood, or at least censured for vanity; and if he blame himself, this will be suspected as designed only to extort a commendation from others. And yet there are certain times and occa-

occasions, in which the wisest and best men have thought it requisite to speak with great freedom and openness of themselves. There is a deference owing to Authority, and a Reverence due to years, and therefore Ancient men and men in Power may speak, as we say, *with Authority*; and any man may speak in his own vindication what would not become him in another case: Every man has a Right to defend his own Innocence by all lawful means, and to speak Truth cannot be unlawful, tho it be in his own commendation; nor can there be any indecency in it, when it is forced from him, for the good not only of himself, but of others, who may suffer by the scandal thrown upon him. All these circumstances concurred in *St Paul's* case, who had the Authority of an Apostle, and the Reverence due to *Paul the Aged*, and the Interest of Souls to plead for what he yet terms *the folly* of commending himself in his own necessary Vindication. *Plutarch* in a set discourse upon this subject determines, that a man may praise himself, when it is necessary for his own defence, and when he may benefit others by it. * *Nestor* speaks of himself ^{Hom. III.} with as great commendation, as he could have ^{x.} spoken of any other man, but when the Authority and Reverence due to his Age warranted that freedom, and the necessity of affairs required it of him, it was not only allowable, but very proper and requisite.

† Nihil necesse est mihi de meipso dicere, quam est id quidem fenile, atariq; nostrae conceditur. Videtisne ut apud Homerum sepissime Nestor de virtutibus suis praedicet? Tertiam enim jam aetatem hominum vixerat, nec erat ei verendum, ne vera de se praedicans nimis videretur aut insolens aut loquax. Cic. de Senect.

† Sum Pius Aeneas ———
 ——— Fama super aethera notus
 Aen. I.
 The Good Aeneas I am called, a Name
 While Fortune favour'd not unknown to
 Fame.
 Turnus ego haud ulli veterum
 virtute secundus
 Devoveo ——— Aen. II.
 I Turnus not the last of all my
 Name
 Devove my Soul ———

† Virgil makes Aeneas and Turnus speak of themselves in such a manner, as is hardly reconcilable to the Rules of Decency of our Times. Mr Dryden in his Translation saw it necessary to soften his expressions, that they might be

more suitable to our customs and manners. But certainly if this were not agreeable to his own Age, it was at least to that notion which Virgil had of the Age in which Aeneas lived, or else so great a Master of Decorum would never have put such words into the mouth of his Hero. Yet these very words he had from † Homer, who makes them to be spoken by Ulysses. Servius says, Heroes were wont thus to speak.

† Ὀδυσσεὺς
 κλέος ἐ-
 γὰρ ἔχει
 Odyll. ix.

* Poets

*Poets likewise assumed a liberty of speaking bold expressions concerning themselves, upon pretence that they were acted by some Divine Power, and therefore were called Prophets; which is an argument that in the common opinion of men, inspired Writers might use such forms of Speech as would not be proper nor decent for others to use. And this liberty was taken by Orators as well as Poets, when the occasion seem'd to require it, as may be observed in * Isocrates. For the ancient Orators too by Longinus's observation, pretended to something more than humane, and would be thought to speak by some kind of impulse; upon which account this liberty might be allowed them.

Jamq; opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira nec ignis
 Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustus. Ovid Metam.
 l. 15.
 Exegi monumentum aere perennius. Horat. carm. lib. 3. Ode 30.

* Panegr. & Panathen.

But it may well be thought needless for me to have used so many words on this subject, when there is so little occasion for any objection of this nature in the Holy Scriptures; and where-ever there can be any pretence for it, it has been considered in its proper place: but I thought it might not be labour ill bestowed, to shew here besides, how bad Criticks they are that can object at this rate. I will say further, that the passage, Tob. 5. 16. concerning the Dog which followed Tobias (which has given occasion to unwary and unskilful men to insult with so much scorn over a Book that is very useful, tho not of Divine Inspira-

tion) is not only innocent, but agreeable to the

* ἀμα τὸ γε δὴ κῆρες ἀργοὶ ἴπῳ. Odiss. ii.
Nec non & gemini custodes limine ab alto
Procedunt, Gressumq; canes comitantur herilem. Æn. 8.
Hoc & in Homero lectum est — & in Historia Romana, quæ ait: Syphax inter duas canes stans scipionem appellavit. Serv.

best patterns of Antiquity, * Homer and Virgil; who thought it a very proper and natural ornament of their Poems to describe Dogs following their Masters; Homer speaking of Telemachus, and Virgil of Evander. And Servius pro-

duceth an Example of the same thing out of the Roman History.

IV. As to the Method used in the Holy Scriptures, there is no reason to expect that Prophecies should be written according to the order of time in which they were delivered, or that Histories should be digested into Diaries or Annals, since there may be Reasons, whether known or unknown to us, why they should be otherwise placed: And thus the Lyrick Poets, * who pretended to Enthusiasm, and an imitation, as it were, of Prophecy, do not confine themselves to observe any order of Time. Some things last foretold might be first to be fulfilled; or some things were more or less remarkable, or concerned the Jews more or less than others; but generally in the Prophetical Books of Scripture, what concerns the same subject is put together, tho' fore-told, or falling out at different times, that the clearer and more distinct view may be had of it. This, as * St Jerom observes, is the cause of divers

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* Vid. Hieron. ad Hieremiam cap. 21, 25.

† Hieron. ad Ezech. cap. 22, 30.

Transpositions in point of Time, in the Prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and † he takes notice, that Daniel having set down the Prophecies, which had relation to the several Reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belsazzar, Darius or Cyrus, according to the order of Time, afterwards declares the Revelations that were made to him, that had no dependance upon the times in which they were made, but were written for the benefit of Posterity. But the several Transpositions in the Scripture are sufficiently accounted for by Commentators. And it must be observed, that the Sacred Writers mention no more of Civil affairs than was necessary to their purpose; and therefore in many things they refer to the Histories then extant, for a fuller account of them: their design was not to write a compleat History of all events, but they confine themselves to such as were most fit for them to take notice of, and keep within the compass of their proper business.

It was expedient that the same Doctrines should be repeated in divers places of Scripture, and interspersed with other things, according to no certain Art or Method, because this prevents their being corrupted or falsified, as they might have been, if they had been all reduced to several distinct Heads, and placed according to the Rules of Art. If one Prophet repeats what another Prophet had said, this is to give it a new confirmation, to re-

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† Id. ad Dan. c. 7.

vive the remembrance, and shew the certainty and importance of it. It is ordinary in the best Authors not only to find the same things repeated in divers places of their Works, but to meet with them repeated in the very same words: thus *Hocrates*, *Xenophon* and *Demosthenes* transcribe in one part of their Works what they have written in another; but none, I think, so frequently as *Demosthenes*: tho

* συνηθες γαρ τούτο ποιοῦν τοῖν παλαιοῖς. Ulp. E. narr. Orat. Demosthen. cont. M. diam.

* *Ulpian* has observed, that this was a usual thing with the Ancient Writers. It was customary likewise with the Philosophers *παρωδῶν*, or to allude to the Verses of *Homer*, and to apply them with little variation upon all occasions, as may be seen frequently in *Diogenes Laertius*.

All the cavils therefore that are made against the style of Scripture proceed from ignorance of Antiquity, and from rashness in judging of ancient Times and foreign Countries by our own. Whoever would either delight or profit, must speak and act in some measure according to the genius of the people with whom he converses: and if we will but read the Scriptures, with the same candour and respect with which we read the Writings of Human Authors, and consider the Times, and Persons, and the Occasions upon which they were written, there is nothing that can seem harsh or improper either in the words or actions of the persons inspired (for it was the manner of those Countries to speak by their actions

actions almost as much as in words.) If we will but observe the circumstances in which the several parts of the Scriptures were written, we shall find cause to admire the Simplicity, and Plainness and Modesty of the style of the Scriptures.

In many Books of the Scriptures the style is sublime and elegant, beyond any thing to be found in other Writings, and yet as natural as if it could not have been otherwise exprest; and this is the true excellency of style, that it be plain and natural, and yet eloquent. *Longinus* gives a high character of *Moses's* style in a Book, the design whereof is to represent the most perfect Idea of Eloquence: indeed such is the fitness both in Verse and Prose of the words and style of *Moses*, so admirably suited to the subject upon all occasions, as if he had been to prescribe a pattern of true Eloquence, as well as to enact Laws. *H. Stephens* has observed that there is a great resemblance in *Herodotus* to the style of the Scriptures: *Herodotus* had *Homer* in his view throughout his History, and *Homer's* expressions are the same with those used in the Scriptures, in many instances, as particularly, when he so often mentions the children of the *Trojans*, and the children of the *Greeks*, as the Scriptures mention the children of *Israel*; and other Greek Authors say, the children of the Physicians, as the Scriptures say, the children of the *Bride-chamber*, and the children of *Light*. * *Grotius*

* Grot. ad 4. Reg. 19. 2. & ad Ezech. initio. * *Grotius* compares *Isaiab* to *Demosthenes*, a sublime, but a most natural and judicious writer: the same Author compares *Ezekiel* to *Homer* for the beauty and nobleness of his style.

† Pref. to Pindarick Odes, and Notes upon Pind. Ode on Iſai. 34. † Mr *Cowley* compares the Prophets, especially *Isaiab*, to *Pindar*: but of *Pindar* he says, that if a man should undertake to translate him word for word, it would be thought that one mad man had translated another. For which he gives this reason, that we must consider in *Pindar* the great difference of time betwixt his Age and ours, which changes us in Pictures, at least the colours of Poetry; the no less difference betwixt the Religions and Customs of our Countries, and a thousand particularities of Places, Persons and Manners, which do but confusedly appear to our eyes at so great a distance; and lastly, we must consider that our ears are strangers to the Musick of his numbers, which sometimes (especially in Songs and Odes) almost without any thing else, makes an excellent Poet. And of *David* he observes, that the best Translators have been so far from doing Honour, or at least Justice to that Divine Poet, that methinks, says he, they revile him worse than *Shimei*. And *Buchanan* himself comes, in his opinion, no less short of *David*, than his Country does of *Judea*. Yet *Isaiab* and the rest of the Prophets and the *Psalms* are translated into our Language word for word, as far as it is possible for one Language to be thus render'd into another; and notwithstanding all the differences of Time, and Place, and Customs,

Stoms, and Persons, no sensible man reads them in the *English* Tongue, but he must acknowledge that their style, with all these disadvantages, is truly great and excellent.

Whereas * there are none of the Heathen Authors, that are so much esteemed, which, if they were literally translated, as the Scriptures are, would bear the reading, but they would appear ridiculous and impossible to be understood.

* Quod sicui non videtur Linguae gratiam interpretatione mutari, Homerum ad verbum exprimat in Latinum. Plus aliquid dicam: eundem in sua lingua profæ verbis interpretetur, videbit ordinem ridiculum, & Poetam eloquentissimum vix loquentem. Hieron. Pref. in Chron. Euseb.

For the Spirit, and Genius, and peculiar Idioms of most Tongues being so very different one from another, and depending upon the Customs and Humours of the people of several Countries, it was the evident care and providence of God, to cause great part of the Scriptures, tho written by so many different men, and at such distant times, and some Books of them in the earlier Ages of the World, to be penned in such a language and style, as is most natural, and which without any want of Art exceeds the most artificial and studied Eloquence in sublime and noble thoughts and expressions, and in all the beauties and ornaments of Speech: and yet, which in all the necessary points of Salvation is easie to be understood, under all the disadvantages of a Verbal Translation, by men of ordinary capacities, who live so many Ages after. The Prophecies of *Isaiab* cannot be read, or heard,

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or thought of without being moved by them: with what Life then, with what Zeal and Flame must they have been delivered? And what a mighty Blessing was such a Prophet to his own Age, and to all succeeding Generations? Of Royal Blood, and of a Style and Behaviour suitable to his Birth; of Divine Virtues, and of Divine Eloquence! He declares things, which were not to be fulfilled till many Ages afterwards, as plainly as if he had seen them before his eyes, and would make all others to see them; he speaks of Christ as clearly, as if with *Simeon* he had had his Saviour in his arms, or with the Wise men had been kneeling down before him, and presenting him with more precious Gifts, than any they had to offer; and describes his Passion as fully, as if he had followed him through every part of it, and having been Crucified with him, had been just entering with him into Paradise. If this be thought a Digression from my subject, I hope it may easily be excused: for who can speak of *Isaiab* without a Digression, when men choose the food of Swine, and trample upon Pearls, as things of no value, as if he and the other Prophets had always the hard fate to preach to *the Rulers of Sodom*, and *the People of Gomorrah*.

But if the style of the Scriptures be not in all places alike, excellent and exact, let it be considered, that

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1. The same stile is not suitable to all subjects, and the stile and dialect is different, according to the difference of the matter, or of the persons, for whose use it was immediately designed. What concerns the *Assyrian* Monarchy in the Prophet *Daniel*, is in the *Chaldee* Tongue, and what relates directly to the *Jews* is in the *Hebrew*. Part of *Ezra* is in *Chaldee*, being a relation of Matter of Fact contained in the *Chaldee* Chronicles; and *Jer. 10. 11.* is in the same Tongue, that the *Jews* might reject the Idolatry of the *Chaldeans* in their Language, and openly profess their own abhorrence of it. And as upon these occasions the Language of Scripture is changed, with respect to the subject and the persons concerned, so the stile must be sometimes altered upon the same account.

2. Artificial strains of Rhetorick, whereby the passions are moved to the utmost height, were very necessary to gain a present point, and carry a Cause by a violent and sudden transport, before Reason could interpose. But Religion being to be propounded upon reasonable motives, there could be no need of Rhetorick, when the evidence of those Miracles by which it was established, afforded so many other more certain and powerful means of persuasion. The Scriptures are not written in the *enticing words of mans wisdom*, but in truth and simplicity, and therefore might well have been without any advantages of Eloquence,

quence, as needing no such helps to recommend them to serious and impartial Minds : And tho God has been pleased to condescend so far to the infirmities of men, as to convey very much of his Revealed Will to us, in such a style, as for its own sake is highly to be esteemed and admired. Yet it was fit that other parts of the Scriptures should have the bare force and evidence of truth only, to convince men, that it might appear that our Religion was propagated not by any Arts of humane Eloquence, but by its own Worth and Excellency : For Eloquence was not used, where it would have been most necessary, if any humane means could be so, in asserting and propagating the Divine Truth. In the propagation of the Gospel all the Eloquence, as well as the Power, and Prejudices, and Vices of Mankind were combined against it, and yet less elegancy and accuracy of style was employed by the Apostles and Evangelists, than had been before used by Moses and the Prophets, who yet had nothing which seemed so strange and wonderful to deliver. Which is one great argument of the Power and Efficacy of the Gospel, that it could prevail so much against all the opposition in the world; only by telling a plain Truth, and in the plainest manner. For where the thing is evident, the fewest and plainest words are best, as in Mathematical Demonstrations, it is enough if men make themselves to be understood : this

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likewise was all that the Apostles aimed at, their Cause and Doctrine was so certain and demonstrable, that any words, which did but fully and clearly express their meaning, were sufficient for their purpose ; their Rhetorick lay in the things themselves, not in words : there is no great Art required to prove that to any man, which he sees with his eyes, and therefore as the power of Miracles was greater under the Gospel, than under the Law, so there was less need of Eloquence in the New Testament than in the Old. Yet it cannot be denied, as a † Learned Critick has declared, † Mer. Calaub. of Entbus. c. that St Paul in some kind and upon some subjects is as eloquent as ever man was ; not inferiour to Demosthenes (in whose writings he believes that Apostle had been much conversant) or Æschines, or any other anciently most admired.

3. It is reasonable to believe, that the Scriptures may be written in the Words and Phrases of the Penmen of the several parts of them, and that the Holy Ghost might permit them to use their own style, so directing them still, and over-ruling them in every word and sentence, that it should infallibly express his own full sense and meaning, and speak the Truth, which he inspired. And therefore tho there be divers styles in the Scriptures, yet this is no prejudice to the Authority and Certainty

Τὴν δὲ γλῶτταν ἰδιωτεύοντες τῷ γε μὴν πρὸς τὰ Σωτήριον αὐτοῖς δαδωρημένην θεῖα καὶ παραδοξαποιῶ δύναμι θαρσύντες, τὸ μὲν ἐν πεινῶν καὶ τήχην λόγων τὰ τῶν διδασκάλων μαθήματα πρὸς βεβαιῶν ἔτε ἤδεσαν, ἔτε ἐνεχείριον. Euseb. Hist. lib.iii.c.24.

tainty of them. *Isaiab*, for instance, being of the Blood Royal, and educated at Court, may write in a more refined and lofty style; and *Amos*, who was brought up among the *Herdsmen of Tekoa*, may speak in a more humble strain, and fetch his Metaphors from lower and meaner things, and yet the sense and substance of both may be from the Holy Ghost, and as exactly true and infallible, as if every word and syllable were dictated by him. But this has been already considered under its proper head.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures.

Whatever uncertainty there can be supposed to be, concerning the Canon of the Holy Scriptures, or the Catalogue and Number of Books of Divine Revelation, this ought to be made no objection against the certainty of Divine Revelation itself, or against the authority of those Books of Scripture, which are universally acknowledged and received by all Churches. For if this be a true way of arguing, then whatever we are ignorant of, must be an argument against the certainty of what we know; and by consequence no man can be certain of any thing, since the wisest man is ignorant of so many things,

things, that he knows very little in comparison of what he is ignorant of. And as to the matter in hand, there is scarce any Author of great note and fame, but that Critics have had Disputes concerning the number of his genuine Works; and yet this has never been thought any prejudice to such as are allowed by all to be genuine. Would not that man make himself ridiculous, who should reject the *Philippicks* of *Tully*, or *Virgil's Æneis*, as spurious, because other Books, either doubtful, or counterfeit, have past under the names of these two Authors? If some Books have been disputed, the rest certainly are genuine beyond all dispute, because they have never been called into question or doubt.

Now if these Books only were of Divine Revelation, concerning which there has never been any Dispute, they contain all things necessary to be believed and practised; and as to the rest, concerning which there has been any controversy, tho' they be exceeding useful to explain divers things, which we find in these, and perhaps to teach us some things (not essential to our Religion, nor necessary to Salvation) which are not to be found elsewhere: yet they are not absolutely necessary to be received, because whatever Doctrines are absolutely necessary, they are to be found fully and plainly delivered in those Books of Scripture, which have ever been received without contradiction or dispute. Many men were undoubtedly

saved, before the writing of these controverted Books, nay, before the writing of any Books at all; Writings being no further necessary, than as they are necessary to convey the knowledge of what is written, when the things now written could be as well known without writing, Books were not necessary: and tho' for after ages it became necessary, that the Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists should consign their Doctrine to writing, yet no more of their writings can be absolutely necessary to be known by us, than what may be sufficient to instruct us in the ways of salvation. It is the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God to afford us more than is absolutely necessary for our spiritual and eternal Life, as he has done for our Natural, and it is a great sin in any man to reject any means of Salvation or Instruction, which God has been pleased to allow: but still that man would sustain his Natural Life and Health, who should think all, that is not necessary to the support of it, *common* or *unclean*, and not fit to be used for food. And if a man without any of his own fault or neglect should come to the knowledge only of the uncontroverted Books, he would find them abundantly sufficient to answer all the ends of Revelation, and to procure his Salvation. It cannot be denied but that one infallible Authority is as great a Security, as never so many could be: but the same Doctrines are taught in several places
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of Scripture, and we ought to be thankful to God for it, that he has been pleased to furnish us with so much more than is absolutely necessary, and to repeat the same things in sundry places and in divers manners, for our further instruction and confirmation in the Faith: tho' it would be absurd and wicked to say, that he who believes all the points of necessary Faith, upon the authority of any one Book of Scripture, has no sufficient means of Salvation, unless he likewise believe them upon the Authority of all the rest.

Not that I suppose any wise and good man can now find any cause to doubt of any Book in the Old or New Testament, whether it be genuine or no; but to suppose the most and the worst that can be supposed, if those Books which at any time have been called in question, were not only dubious, but certainly spurious, the remaining Books, which were never doubted of, are sufficient for all the necessary ends and purposes of a Revelation: and therefore this ought to be no objection against the Authority of the Scriptures, that the Authority of some Books has been formerly matter of controversy.

I shall enter upon no discourse concerning the Apocryphal Books, the authority whereof has been so often and so effectually disproved by Protestants, that the most learned Papists have now little to say for them, but are forced only to fly to the authority of their

Church, which is in effect to beg the thing in question, or to beg something as hard to be granted, *viz.* the infallibility of the Church of *Rome*. But I shall here engage in no controversy of that nature. Both Protestants and Papists are, generally speaking, agreed, that the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and the Writings of the Evangelists and the Apostles in the New are of Divine Authority; and if this be so, the Christian Religion must be true, whether there be, or be not others of the same nature, and of equal authority. These Books in the main have already been proved to be genuine, and without any material corruption or alteration. I shall now only propose such general considerations, as may be sufficient to obviate objections.

The agreement between the *Jews* and *Samaritans* in the *Pentateuch*, is a clear evidence for its Authority. And tho there were many and great Idolatries committed in the Kingdom of *Judah*, yet by the good providence of God there never was such a total Apostacy in the people, nor so long a succession of Idolatrous Kings, as that the Books, either of the Law or the Prophets, can be supposed to have been suppressed or altered. For three years under *Rehoboam*, they walked in the way of *David* and *Solomon*, 2 Chron. 11. 17. 12. 1, and tho afterwards he forsook the Law of the Lord, and all *Israel* with him, his Reign was in all but seven-

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teen years. *Abijam* was a wicked King, but he reigned no longer than three years, 1 Kings xv. 2. *Asa* the third from *Solomon*, and *Jehoshaphat* his Son, were great Reformers; and *Asa* reigned one and forty years, and *Jehoshaphat* five and twenty years, 2 Chron. xvi. 13. xx. 31. The two next Kings in succession did evil in the sight of the Lord, but their Reigns were short, *Jehoram* reigned eight years, and *Ahaziah* but one, 2 Chron. xxi. 20. xxii. 2. During the interval of six years under the usurpation of *Athaliah*, the people could not be greatly corrupted: for she was hateful to them, as *Jehoram* her husband had been before her, and they readily joyned with *Jehoiada* in slaying her, and in restoring the worship of God, 2 Chron. xxii. *Joash* the son of *Ahaziah* did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of *Jehoiada*, 2 Chron. xxiv. 2. We are sure that he reigned well three and twenty years, 2 Kings xii. 6. and probably much longer, for *Jehoiada* lived to a very great age, 2 Chron. xxiv. 15. *Amaziah* his son has the same character, and with the same abatement, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart, 2 Chron. xxv. 2. or yet not like *David* his Father: he did according to all things as *Joash* his Father did, 2 Kings xiv. 3. *Uzziah* son to *Amaziah* reigned well, and sought God in the days of *Zachariah*, 2 Chron. xxvi. 5. and after he was seized with the Leprosie for

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invading the Priests office, the administration of affairs was in the hands of his Son *Jotham*, vers. 21. who imitated the good part of his fathers Reign, Chap. xxvii. 2. *Abaz* was wicked and an Idolater, but he reigned only sixteen years, Chap. xxviii. 1. and his son *Hezekiah* wrought a great Reformation, who reigned twenty nine years, Chap. xxix. 1. *Manasses* was much given to Idolatry in the former part of his Reign, but after his captivity in *Babylon* he was very zealous against it, Chap. xxxiii. 15, 16. *Amon* imitated the ill part of his Father's Reign, but his own continued no longer than two years, Chap. xxxiii. 21. The next was *Josiah*, in whose time the Book of the Law was found in the Temple, which must be the Book of *Moses's* own hand-writing; for it is evident, that a Book of the Law could be no such rare thing at that time in *Jerusalem*, as to be taken so much notice of, unless it had been that Book, which was laid up in the side of the Ark, and was to be transcribed by every King. It seems, that Book of the Law had been purposely hid, to preserve it from the attempts of Idolaters, who it was feared might have a design to destroy it: for if it had only lain by neglected, the finding of it could have been no such surprising thing, because the place in the Temple was well known, where it was wont to be kept in the side of the Ark, and where they might have sought for it: but it was probably

bly at that time supposed to have been utterly lost, and its being found in the Ruines of the Temple, which was built for the observation of it, and where it ought to have been kept with the greatest care, as a most inestimable treasure; the veneration which *Josiah* had for so sacred a Writing, and the happy and unexpected recovery of it, when it had been disregarded and almost lost, through the iniquity of his Predecessors; these considerations could not but exceedingly move a mind so tender and affectionately pious as that Kings, when he received the Law under *Moses's* own hand, sent him, as he believed by God himself, and delivered to him, as it were, anew from Heaven. Not long after his time was the Captivity in *Babylon*; till which there were always Prophets, frequent Reformati- ons, and never any succession of Idolatrous Kings, which continued for a long time together; very few Kings were Idolatrous throughout their whole Reigns, and those that were, reigned but a short time.

* It has been proved, that the *Pentateuch* ^{Book 1.} and the Books of the Prophets, written before ^{Part 2. c.} the Captivity were preserved amongst the *Jews* ^{6. & 9.} till their return, and it is acknowledg'd by those who are of another opinion, that *Ezra*, who composed the Canon, did it by a Prophetick spirit, or had the assistance of Prophets in the doing it. * *Josephus* says, that ^{Joseph.} their Books after the time of *Artaxerxes* are ^{Cont. A-} not ^{pion. lib.}

The Reasonableness and Certainty

not of equal authority with those before his time, for want of a certain succession of Prophets. And since the *Jews* admitted no writings as inspired, into the Canon after *Malachi's* Prophecy, this shews their sincerity and exactness in examining the truth and authority of such Writings, as they admitted into their Canon of Scripture. The Pharisees made the commandment of God of no effect by their Traditions, but never durst presume to impose them under the notion and character of a Book of the Scriptures. The modern *Jews* in like manner never dared to pretend to new Books of Revelation, but have constantly adhered to the old.

And what inducement could the *Jews* have to receive these Books into their Canon, of which it consists, rather than the Apocryphal Books, but the evidence of their Divine Authority? which is a thing more especially remarkable in some Books. Why should they receive certain Books under the Names of *Solomon, Esther, Daniel* and *Ezra*, but not admit into the Canon others going under the same names, but because of the difference in their Authority? Why should they receive the Books of those whom their fore-fathers had slain, and those very Books for which they slew them, but upon the clearest evidence? It is certain they could be possess'd with no prejudice in their favour, but with very many against the Books of such Authors. To give another instance; The Book of *Ruth* contains

of the Christian Religion.

tains the affairs and transactions of a particular Family, of no great consequence, as one might imagine at first view, and yet it has been preserved with as much care, and as constantly received as the rest. There is little reason, upon human considerations, why a relation concerning that Family should be inserted into the Canon of Scripture, rather than one concerning any other. But the lineage of the *Messias* is set forth in it, and that was a sufficient reason why it should be inserted; and therefore by the Divine Wisdom and Providence, neither the emulation and envy of other Families, nor any other cause or accident hindred its reception and preservation amongst the other inspired Books. And in that History there is an account not very honourable for *David's* Family, in deriving his descent from *Phares* of *Thamar*, and shewing that his Great Grandmother was a *Moabites*; the *Moabites* being a people, who had an indelible mark of infamy fixt upon them by the Law of *Moses*, *Deutr. xxiii. 3.*

II. As the Pentateuch was ever acknowledged by the People of *Israel* after their separation from the Tribe *Judah*; so if they rejected the writings of the Prophets, it must have been because all or most of them were written by Prophets, who were of the two Tribes, and all the Prophets of *Israel* owning the Temple of *Jerusalem* to be the true place of Worship, the *Israelites* and *Samaritans* must have great prejudices against them upon that

that account, and it cannot be expected, that they should receive the Books of any of the Prophets in the same manner as they did those of *Moses*. The Books of *Samuel*, *David* and *Solomon* had less regard paid to them upon Reasons of State by the Tribes, who followed the Revolt of *Jeroboam*: yet when * *Joseph Scaliger* sent to the *Samaritans* for the Canticles of the Book of *Psalms* in their Language; as well as for the Book of the Law and of *Joshua*, they promised to send him them. And it is proved sufficiently by Dr † *Lightfoot*, that neither the *Samaritans*, nor the *Sadducees* rejected the Books of the Old Testament, tho they did not admit the rest into the same veneration and authority with the Books of *Moses*, nor read them in their Synagogues. This is also proved by F. *Simon* * both of the *Sadducees* and the *Karæi*, and † *Morinus* likewise proves it of the *Karæi*, who are generally taken for *Sadducees*; F. *Simon* maintains the contrary, and that they have wrong done them in being charged with the opinions of the *Sadducees*: However, this is not material to our present purpose, since he shews that both the *Sadducees* and the *Karæi*, or *Caraites*, and all the *Jews* besides received the entire Volume of the Scriptures without any contradiction.* *Hackspar* likewise has shewed that the *Sadducees* denied not the Authority of the Books of the Prophets.

III Concerning the Books, whereof we we find mention made in the Old Testament, either

* Antiqu. Orient. Eccl. E-pist. 1.

† Hebr. & Talmud exercit. on Joh. iv. 25.

* Crit. Hist. V. T. lib. 1. c. 16. & 29. Disquirit. Crit. c. 12. † Epist. 70. inter Antiqu. Eccl. Orient.

‡ Prefat. de Lipmanno.

either 1. They are not different from those, which are now in the Canon, but the same Books under divers Names. Or 2. They were not written by Inspiration, tho written by Prophets. For we are not to suppose, that the Prophets were inspired in every thing, that they wrote, any more than in all they spoke. And this shews the care and integrity of the *Jews* in compiling their Canon, that they would not take into it all the Writings even of the Prophets themselves, but only such as they knew to be written by them, as Prophets, that is, by Inspiration, the Prophets themselves no doubt making a distinction (as we find St *Paul* did) between what they had written by the Spirit of God, and that in which they had not his immediate and extraordinary direction, and infallible assistance. Or 3. They might not be written by Prophets. For the office of *Recorder*, or *Remembrancer*, or *Writer of Chronicles* (as it is explained in the Margin) is mentioned as an office of great Honour and Trust, and was distinct from that of the Prophets, 2 *Sam.* viii. 16. 2 *Kings* xviii. 18. 2 *Chron.* xxxiv. 8. *Isaiab* xxxvi. 3, 22. Besides, the *Hebrews* called every small Writing a Book: Thus *Deut.* xxiv. 1. that which we render a Bill of Divorcement is in the Original a Book of Divorcement, the word being the same, which, *Joh.* x. 13. and 2 *Sam.* i. 18. is translated the Book of *Jasher*. So *Matt.* xix. 7. and *Mark* x. 4. it is in the

Greek

Greek a *Book* of Divorcement, the word is the same which the *Septuagint* had used ; it indeed may signifie a little *Book*, but it often signifies a *Book*, without that distinction, and so it is rendered 2 *Tim.* iv. 13. *David's* Letter to *Joab* is a *Book* in the *Hebrew* and in the *Greek*, 2 *Sam.* xi. 14, 15. and *Lettets* are stiled *Books* by * *Herod.* * *Herodotus*. Or 4. Tho it should be granted that some *Books*, which were written by *Inspiration*, are now lost, it is no absurdity to suppose that *God* should suffer *Writings* to be lost, thro the fault and negligence of men, which were dictated by his *Spirit*. Several things might by the *Prophets* be delivered by *Revelation* to the persons whom they concerned, which were never committed to writing ; and others, which were written, but which were not necessary to the ends of *Revelation* in general, but rather concerned particular times and places, and the substance whereof, as far as the world in general is concerned, is to be found in the other *Scriptures*, might by the carelessness of men never come to the sight and knowledge of *Posterity*.

And here I shall observe, that the *Books* of *Prophecy* have always the *Names* of the *Authors* exprest, and commonly they are often repeated in the *Books* themselves, but in the *Historical* *Books* there was not the same reason for it ; because in matters of fact, which are past, an *Author* may easily be disproved,

if

if he relates what is false of his own times, or of times whereof there are *memorials* still extant. But the *Credit* of *Prophecies* concerning things to come, a long time after, to pass, must depend upon the *Mission* and *Authority* of the *Prophet* only, and therefore it was necessary that the *Names* of the *Prophets* should be annexed, that their *Predictions* might be depended upon, when they were known to be delivered by men, who by other *Predictions* already fulfilled, had proved themselves to be true *Prophets*.

IV. The very preservation of *Books* of so great *Antiquity*, thro so many changes and revolutions, against all the injuries of *Time* and *Ignorance*, against the violence of *War* and the malice of *Adversaries*, and so many other *Accidents*, which have destroyed most other *Books* of any considerable *Antiquity*, is a certain indication of a wonderful *Providence* concerned for them, and of that evidence whereby they were at first attested. The *Laws* of the wisest *Law-givers* of the most flourishing and powerful *Nations* have been so little regarded by the people to whom they were given, that they soon forsook the practice of them, and readily delivered up themselves to be governed by other *Laws*, upon any *Revolution* ; and all the pretences to *Revelation*, which most of the *Ancient* *Law-givers* assumed to themselves, could make them no longer adhered to, nor so much valued, as to outlive

the

the fate of the particular Kingdoms and States for which they were contrived : but most of them were changed or laid aside before, and the rest given up and abandoned, as out of date, and of little use or esteem afterwards, and all of them were so little able to withstand the destruction of time, that we know not much more of them, than that the best and most ancient were in great measure taken out of the Laws of *Moses*. But the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets have continued entire and unchanged under all accidents and revolutions of affairs, bearing this character as well as others of him, who is immutable ; they have been still asserted against all the malice and opposition of Enemies by a captivated and dispersed people, who by the signal providence of God, tho they reject their *Messias*, yet still acknowledge those prophecies, which foretold his coming, and after their dispersion for so many hundred years, are so far from renouncing them, that they assert and maintain them, and are zealous even to superstition, for those Books, which command that worship, and appoint those Solemnities, which they have so long been out of all possibility to observe, as if those Laws, which were once so uneasy to their Fore-fathers, were now become natural to their Posterity, or rather because they were revealed by him, whose word shall never pass away till all be fulfilled.

V. The

V. The New Testament gives evidence and confirmation to the Books of the Old, which are so often cited in it.

VI. The Christians were religiously cautious and circumspect in admitting Books into the Canon of the New Testament. The * Epistle to the *Hebrews*, and the second Epistle of St *Peter*, were at first scrupled only, or chiefly upon the account of the style ; the style of the former being thought different from that of St *Paul*, and the Style of the latter from that of St *Peter*. The Epistle of St *Jude* was likewise doubted of for this reason, because the Apocryphal Book of *Enoch* is cited in it. Writings, which went under the names of several of the Apostles were rejected, and by general consent laid aside. The genuine Epistle of St *Barnabas*, who is stiled an Apostle, *Acts* xiii. 2. xiv. 14. was never received but as Apocryphal ; and the First Epistle of St *Clement*, of whom St *Paul* gives as high a character, *Phil.* iv. 3. as he doth of St *Luke*, or as St *Peter* ever gave of St *Mark*, was never admitted among the Canonical Books, tho it was wont to be read in Churches. But the Gospel according to St *Mark*, and the Gospel and Acts of the Apostles written by St *Luke*, have ever been received for canonical. For which no reason can be given, but that St *Mark* and St *Luke* were known to have written by inspiration, since upon all personal and humane Accounts, an Epistle of St *Bar-*

* Hieron.
Catalog.
Eccl.
Script.

† Unam ad ædificationem Ecclesiæ pertinentem Epistolam composuit, quæ inter Apocryphas scripturas legitur. Id. ib.

Barnabas or St Clement, must have carried as much Authority with it, as any thing under the name of St Mark, or St Luke. † St Jerom says, that St Barnabas was the Author of one Epistle written for the edification of the Church, which is read among the Apocryphal Books; so that Books were stiled *Apocryphal*, not because it was uncertain who were the Authors of them, but because it was doubtful whether they were written by inspiration or no. So careful was the Primitive Church to receive none into the Canon, but Books certainly inspired.

* Crit. Hist. of the N. T. Part. 1. c. 1.

It is well observed * by F. Simon, to this purpose, that if we compare the Gospels and the other Books of the New Testament with the Liturgies, that we have under the names of several Apostles, to whom the most part of the Eastern Christians do attribute them, we shall be convinced that the Gospels are truly the Apostles. For all the Churches have preserved them in their Ancient Purity; whereas every particular Nation hath added to their Liturgies, and hath taken the liberty often to revise them. The respect that hath been always had to the Writings of the New Testament, without inserting any considerable additions therein, is an evident proof that all people have looked upon them, as Divine Books, which it is not lawful for any to alter. On the contrary, they have been perswaded, that the Liturgies, tho they bear the Names of the Apostles, or of some Disciples of Jesus Christ, were

were not originally written by them, to whom they were attributed. And therefore it hath been left free to the Churches to add to them, or to diminish from them, according as occasion requires.

VII. As the Primitive Christians were very jealous and cautious in admitting Books into the Canon, so they had sufficient means and opportunities to examine and distinguish the genuine and inspired Writings from the Apocryphal or spurious. The way of Writing, and the hands of the Apostles were well known to those to whom they wrote, as St Paul intimates of his own hand and manner of Salutation: for when he used an Amanuensis, yet he wrote *the Salutation with his own Hand*, as his token in every Epistle, 2 Thess. iii. 17. They generally wrote to whole Churches, but particular men are frequently named in their Epistles, which was a great means to ascertain the Authority of them.

* Tertullian appeals to Authentick Books or the very Hand-writings of the Apostles themselves. For tho it be acknowledged, that the word *Authenticus* doth not always denote the Original Writing under the Author's own Hand, but sometimes only the Original Language; yet the words of Tertullian are express, that the Original Epistles were in his times still extant: for which

* Age jam, qui vobis curiositate melius exercere in negotio salutis tuæ, percurrere Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc Cathedra Apostolorum suis locis presidentur, apud quas ipsæ Authenticæ Literæ eorum recitantur. Tertull. de Præscript. c. 36.

I

Rea-

Reason he refers the Hereticks to the Aposto-
lical Churches, where they were read, viz. to
the Church of Corinth, of Phillippi, Thessa-
lonica, Ephesus, and Rome; but the Epistles of
the Apostles were read in Greek, without
doubt, in other Churches besides these, and
the Reason why he refers them to the Aposto-
lical Churches rather than to any other, must
be because the Originals under St Paul's own
Hands were there still to be seen, and he men-
tions that the Thrones or Seats of the Apostles
were then also preserved, as † Eusebius says,
that of St James was preserved to his time.

† Euseb.
Hist. lib.
vii. c. 19.
* Apol. 2.

Justin * Martyr ascribes the Gospels to the
Apostles, he transcribes the Christian Doctrine
at large out of them, and declares that they
were read in the Christian Assemblies every
Sunday. † St Ireneus, a Disciple of St Polycarp, who
was made by Bishop St John, gives a particular
account of the Writings of the Four Evange-
lists, and says there were Four Gospels and no
more, and that these were written by St Mat-
thew, and St Mark, and St Luke, and St John.

† Irenæ.
lib. 3 c. 2.

* Tertullian undertook the Defence of the Four
Gospels against Marcion. And these Fathers
frequently quote these and the other Writings
of the Apostles; so do likewise Clemens Roma-
nus and Ignatius, who lived and conversed with
the Apostles themselves. But in our Disputes
with Infidels particular regard is to be had to
the History of the Gospel, for our Proof
against them depends upon matter of Fact.
Both

* Tertull.
adv. Mar-
cion. lib.
iv. c. 2, 5.

Both * Grotius and F. Simon have proved that
the Gospel written in Hebrew by St Matthew
was preserved to the time of St Jerom and Epi-
phanus, and that tho the Nazarens had made
some additions to it, yet they had made no
Alterations in the Original Text. F. Simon
moreover says, that the Gospel of St Matthew
had been translated undoubtedly out of He-
brew into Greek, before the Nazarens had in-
serted their Additions, these being to be found
in no Greek Copy. The Ebionites had corrupt-
ed the Hebrew Copy, which they used, and
had left out what they pleased; but the Copy
of the Nazarens, Epiphani-
us † says was more entire,
only he is not certain whe-
ther they retained the Ge-
nealogy of Christ; but it
is most probable in F. Si-
mon's judgment, that they
did retain it, tho the Ebi-
onites omitted it. So that tho there were
some Additions made by the Nazarens, yet as
far as the proof of our Religion against Infi-
dels is concerned, the Hebrew Gospel, in its
Original Hebrew, as it was written by St Mat-
thew, remained exactly perfect for divers ages.
Till the Sect of the Nazarens ceasing, and the
Hebrew Tongue growing out of use, the Greek
Translation only was preserved. This Tran-
slation of St Matthew's Gospel is ascribed to
one of the Apostles or Evangelists, tho it be

* Grot. in
Mat. F.
Sim. Crit.
Hist. on the
N. T. c. 7, 8.

† ἔχει δὲ τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον
εὐαγγέλιον πληρέστατον Ἑβραϊστί.
παρ' αὐτοῖς ὡς σαφῶς τῆτο καθὼς
ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐγγράφη Ἑβραϊκοῖς γράμ-
μασιν ἵτι σώζεται ἐκ οἷδα δὲ τῆ
καὶ τὰς γενεαλογίας τὰς ἐπὶ τῷ
Ἀβραάμ ἔχει χειρὸς περικειμένων.
Epiphani. Hæres. 29. Num. 9.

not certain to whom of them it belongs. **Papianus* speaks of the times before there was any Authentick Version, when he says that every one translated it, as he could, for his own use. It appears from him however, that there were *Greek* Versions of the Gospel of *St Matthew* made immediately upon its first publication; and from hence we may be assured that *St John* revised and approved the present Version (which is by some attributed to him), by whomsoever it was made at first. For this Gospel in the *Greek* Tongue being most in use, and thereby preserved, when the Original *Hebrew* has been so long ago lost, it is not to be supposed that *St John* should have no regard to it in that Review which he took of the other Gospels, that were written originally in *Greek*. We read in † *Photius*, that he revised the Gospels which were brought to him written in divers Languages, the Versions as well as the Originals, and therefore this of *St Matthew's* Gospel cannot be supposed to have been omitted.

† Phot. cod. ccliv.

One of the Miraculous Gifts was that of *Discerning of Spirits*, whereby persons endued with it were enabled to distinguish true Revelations from Impostures, 1 *Cor.* xii. 10. And *St John* wrote his Gospel and his Epistles to confute those Hereticks, who were the chief Forgers of counterfeit Books of Scripture, or the most notorious corrupters of the true Books: and his Life was by the Providence of God

God prolonged, that he might be able both to vindicate and perfect the Canon of Scripture. We find that † he discovered an Imposture, which was framed concerning *St Paul*, and * that he read and approved the Gospels which had been written before his own; and there is no reason to doubt, but he had seen all the other Writings of the New Testament, and so finished the Canon of Scripture himself. And the Scriptures of the New Testament were read in the Churches and Assemblies of Christians from the beginning, as those of the Old Testament had been in the Synagogues of the *Jews*, by which means they became so divulged and published, that they could be neither lost nor falsified.

† Hier. Catal. in St Luc.

* Τῶν περὶ ἀναγεγραμμένων τε κειμένων εὐαγγελίων εἰς πάντας ἡδὲ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν διαδεδομένων, ἐποδείξατο μὲν φασίν, ἀλήθειαν εὐλογοῦσιν ἐπιμαρτυρήσαντα. Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. c. 24. — quod quum legisset Matthæi, Marci, & Luca volumina, probaverit quidem Textum Historiæ, & vera eos dixisse firmaverit Hieron. Catal. in St. Joan.

VIII. The Books of the New Testament were acknowledged to be genuine by the Adversaries of the Christian Religion. To say nothing of *St Paul's* Epistles, which he frequently quotes, the Gospels were allowed by *Julian* * the Apostate to belong to the Authors, whose names they bear. † *Trypho* owns he had read the Gospels, and makes no question or scruples about the Authors. † *Celsus* quotes the Scriptures frequently, and *Hierocles*, (as * *Lactantius*, who had heard him discourse, says) was as conversant in them, as

* Cyrill. Alex. contr. Jul. lib. x. † Jult. Marc. Dial. al. * Lactant. Institut. lib. v. c. if 2, 3.

if he had once been a Christian, yet neither of them moved any dispute, concerning the Authors of the Books of the Scriptures, but in referring to them upon all occasions, shewed that they had nothing to object on that Head. And when † *Celsus* says, that some of the Christians made alterations in the Gospels, this is a confession that some only did it, and *Origen* shews that they were Hereticks, viz. the *Marcionists* and *Valentinians*, and perhaps the Disciples of *Lucanus* or *Lucianus*, for in this he could not be positive, tho this *Lucanus* was a follower of *Marcion*.

IX. There are still extant Copies of great Antiquity. The *Cambridge* Copy in *Greek* and *Latin*, containing the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; and that which is supposed to be the second part of it, containing *St Paul's* Epistles, in the *French Kings* Library, and another the like Copy, which is in the Library of the *Benedictines* of *St Germain's* * are concluded to be a thousand years old at least: *Morinus* thought them to be ancienter than *St Jerom's* time. The *Alexandrian* Copy is believed to have been written by *Thecla*, above one thousand three hundred years ago. *Morinus* † acknowledgeth it to be of above twelve hundred years date. Bishop * *Walton* supposes the *Alexandrian* MS. to be at least as old as that in the *Vatican*, which is allowed to be twelve hundred years old. There is † one *Syriack* MS. of the Gospels in the

the Library of the Duke of *Florence*, of above a thousand years Antiquity, and another not much less ancient. A * *Gothick* Translation of the Four Evangelists in the Abbey of *Werdin*, is likewise of above a thousand years Antiquity. And what ancient Books are there, of which the Originals are still extant? or of which there are so ancient Copies, as of the Scriptures?

X. Sufficient reasons may be given, to shew how it came to pass, that the Authority of some Books was at first doubted of.

I. The Epistle to the *Hebrews* had no name prefixt, (either because the *Jews* were prejudiced against *St Paul*, or because the *Gentiles* were his more peculiar care, or for some other reason unknown) and in this it differs from the rest of *St Paul's* Epistles, and the † style is different, which occasioned the first doubts about it (as it happend likewise to *St Peter's* second Epistle upon the account of its style) and then the *Novatians* alledging some Texts in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* in favour of their opinion, this made the Orthodox the less inclined to receive a Book, which before had been disputed, and therefore tho it was received in the East, it was questioned at *Rome*, where *Novatian* begun his Schisms. The second Epistle of *St Peter* might be scrupled on the same account, and both that and the *Revelation* of *St John* being alledged for the *Millennium*, by such as understood it in a

† Orig. cont. Cels. lib. 2.

* F. Simon Crit. Hist. of the N. Test. Part 1. c. 31. Mabil. de Re Diplom. lib. 5. Tabell. 1. † Epist. 54. inter Antiqu. Eccl. Orient. * Prolegom. ix. 34. † F. Sim. Crit. Hist. of the N. T. Part. 2. c.

* Gruter. Inscript. p. 146.

† Hieron. Catal. i. Petr. & Paul.

gross sense, this caused the Authority of those Books to be called in question, which is said * expressly of the *Revelation*.

2. Some Epistles were written to particular persons, or directed to such as lived at a great distance, and by reason of Persecutions arising, the Authentick Epistles might not readily be produced.

3. Some Books were not usually read in the Churches, as the rest were. All the Books of Scripture, except the *Revelation* of St *John*, are inserted in the Catalogue of the Council of *Laodicea*, and this was omitted, because by reason of the abstruse Mysteries contained in it, it was not publickly read in Churches: for that Catalogue was designed to shew what Books ought to be read in the publick Assemblies. But the *Revelation* was long before acknowledged to be genuine by † *Justin Martyr*, by *Irenæus*, and by *Tertullian*, and others: both *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus* wrote a comment upon the *Revelation* of St *John*. The Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Epistle of St *James*, and the second Epistle of St *Peter*, are cited by *Clemens Romanus*, in his first Epistle, which was itself wont to be read in Churches.

4. The Hereticks would use all their endeavours and subtilty to hinder the reception of

of those Books; by which their Heresies were disproved, and they might so far have effect, as to make some doubt for a while of their Authority. For instance, *Diotrephes*, an ambitious aspiring man, who prated against St *John* with malicious words, and had so much power, as to cast the Brethren out of the Church, would forbid the receiving of St *John's* Epistles, as well as the receiving the Brethren of that Apostles Communion; and that he did this, St *John* himself intimates, when he says, *I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the Pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not*, Joh. Epist. iii. 9. that is, he received not St *John's* Epistle, for that would have been to receive him as an Apostle, or to acknowledge his Authority.

XI. Tho the Authority of some Books hath been questioned by private men, yet those Books were never rejected by any Council of the Church, tho frequent Councils were called in the first Ages of Christianity, and had this very thing under consideration, * *Tertullian*, after he had turned *Montanist*, rejecting the authority of *Hermas's Pastor*, as not being received into the Canon of Scripture, says, that it was reckoned amongst the Apocryphal Books by all the Councils of his Adversaries, the Orthodox. From whence it is evident, that in *Tertullian's* time divers Councils had past their Censure upon the Apocryphal Books, and that the Canon of

Scri-

Euseb.
Hist. lib.
v. c. 25.

Justin.
Mart.
Dialog.
Tertull.
de Refur.
27, 38.
dv.
Marcion.
p. ii. c.
iii. c. 14.
num.

* Tertull.
de Pudi-
cit. c. 19.

14. Euseb. Hist. lib. iv. c. 18. v. c. 8. Hierom. Catal. in Jo-

Scripture had been fixt long before. So that the time, in which some of these Councils were held, must probably be, whilst St Polycarp a Disciple of St John was yet living, whose Martyrdom by the earliest computation was not till A. D. cxlvii. at least they must be held in Irenæus life time, who conversed with St Polycarp, and lived at the same time with Tertullian. Thus was the Canon of Scripture vouched by those, who had received it from St John, and Councils upon occasion were called (which † Tertullian elsewhere mentions as very numerous and frequent in Greece) to give testimony to the Genuine Canon, and censure Apocryphal Books. It is manifest that the Canon of Scripture was settled before the Council of Laodicea, which in the lixth Canon appoints that no Books, * which are *extra Canonem*, but only Canonical Books should be read in the Christian Assemblies, and then subjoyns the Titles of the Canonical Books, which Title they had, as Zonaras and Balsamon observe, because they were inserted into the Apostles Canons, and all others were styl'd *uncanonical*. And it is concluded, after the strictest examination, by the best Criticks, that those which go under the Name of the Apostles Canons, are the Canons of Councils assembled before the Council of Nice, inasmuch as they are referred to by that Council; and that they are styl'd *Apostolical*, because they were made by Apostolical Men, or such as lived next to the

† Tertull. de Jejun. c. 13.

* ἡ δὲ ἰδιωτικὴ ψαλμὸς κίθαρὰ, ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἡ δὲ ἀκανόνισα βιβλία, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἀποστολικὰ τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ κανῶν διαθήκῃς. Conc. Laod. can. lix.

the Apostles times, and delivered in these Canons what they had received from the Apostles. Dr Beverege thinks they † were collected into one Body by Clemens Alexandrinus, and Dr Cave seemed inclined to be of the same judgment. As to the Authority of the particular Apostolical Canon, which contains the Canon of Scripture, of the Council of Laodicea, gives a sufficient Testimony to it, so far as it concerns the Books of the New Testament; and shews wherein it has been corrupted since. All which very well agrees with that which I observed from Tertullian, that frequent Councils were called in the first Ages, and that they had the Canon of Scripture among other things under consideration, which we find set down in the last of the Apostles Canons, and from thence, in the Canons of the Council of Laodicea; no Book being omitted but the Revelation of St John, which yet had been acknowledged and received as Authentick from the beginning of those who had most reason to know of what Authority it was; but none were inserted into the Canon, but such Books as were appointed to be constantly read in the Assemblies of Christians. It appears then that the Canon of Scripture was finished by St John, and that such Books as were not of Divine Authority were rejected, by Councils held, when there were living Witnesses to certify St John's Approbation of the Canon, or at least those, who had received it from such Witnesses; the Gospels of the

* Bever. Annot. ad Pandect. Can. & Cod. Can. Eccl. Primit. vind. Cave Histor. Liter. in clem. Roman.

the other Evangelists were translated into divers Languages in St *John's* Life time, and we must in reason suppose the same of the other Books of Scripture; this is certain that they were all very early translated into many Tongues, and disperied into so many Hands, in so many Countries, that it was impossible they should be either lost or falsified, especially since the several sects of Christians were never more jealous and watchful over each other in any thing than in this particular, the several Interests and Pretensions of all parties being chiefly concerned in it, and no Catalogue of Books could have been received exclusively to all others, but upon the clearest evidence.

XII. When it once appeared, that the Books, which had been doubted of, belonged to the Canon of Scripture, they were afterwards generally acknowledged, and constantly received in all Churches: every Sect has since used all Arts and Endeavours to reconcile the Scriptures to their own Doctrines; few or none presuming to reject the Authority of any of these Books, which they would never scruple to do, if they suppos'd they could make out any plausible pretence for it. Protestants have refused to admit of the Apocryphal Books, as inspired; but whoever have gone about to reject any part of the Canonical Scriptures, have been universally declared against for it: whereof no other reason can be given, but the Evidence, that is for the Authority of the
Ca.

Canonical Books of Scripture, which is wanting for the Authority of the Apocryphal Books. Papists own the Authority of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and of the fourteenth Chapter of that Epistle, which is directly against praying in an unknown Tongue; and they acknowledge the Epistle to the *Galatians* to be genuine, tho the second Chapter be so clearly against the pretensions of the Church of *Rome*. These Epistles indeed were never controverted: but the Epistle to the *Hebrews* likewise is not rejected by the *Socinians*, the Divine Nature of Christ and the Merit and Satisfaction of his sufferings are so plainly asserted in it; and they dare not deny the Authority of the Gospel and Epistles of St *John*, tho they are so hard put to it, to expound them to their own sense, that *Socinus* was forc'd to pretend to I know not what Revelation to help out one of his explications, which he would not have done, if he could have found out any colour for not admitting the Authority of a Text, so directly contrary to his own Tenents, that he could not expect, that any thing less than a Revelation should procure any credit to his Interpretation. And generally the case is the same with other Sects: those that differ never much one from another in the Interpretation of particular Texts, yet agree in the acknowledgment of the Authority of the Canon of Scripture itself, or can find out no sufficient pretence to disown it.

C H A P. V.

Of the various Readings in the Old and New Testament.

IT is to be observ'd, that an extraordinary Providence has in a great measure secur'd the Holy Scriptures from those Casualties which are incident to humane Writings. For the great Antiquity of many Books of the Scriptures, beyond that of any other Books in the World, the multitude of Copies, which have been taken in all Ages and Nations, the difficulty to avoid mistakes in transcribing Books, in a Language which has so many of its Letters and of its Words themselves so like one another, the defect of the *Hebrew* Vowels, and the late invention (as it is generally now acknowledged) of the Points, the change of the *Samaritan*, or ancient *Hebrew* for the present *Hebrew* Character, the captivity of the whole Nation of the *Jews* for seventy years, and the mixtures and changes, which were during that time, brought into their Language; in short, all the accidents which have ever happened to occasion errors or mistakes in any Book, have concurred to cause them in the Old Testament; and yet the different Readings are much fewer, and make

much

much less alteration in the sense, than those of any other Book of the same bigness, and of any Note and Antiquity, if all the Copies should be carefully examined, and every little variation as punctually set down, as those of the Scriptures have been. But tho' from hence it may appear, that a peculiar providence has been concerned in the preservation of the Books of the Scriptures, yet from humane considerations and arguments, we may likewise be assured, that nothing prejudicial to the Authority of the Scriptures has happened by any of these means.

1. The defect in the *Hebrew* Vowels, and the late Invention of the Points is no prejudice to the Authority of the Bible, as we now have it. Tho' the Points, which critically determine the exact Reading of the *Hebrew* Tongue, be of a later invention, yet that Tongue was never without its Vowels. For *Aleph, Vau, and Jod,* and (which some add) *He* and *Gnajm*, before the invention of the Points, were used as Vowels, as it is evidently proved from *Josephus*, Vid. Walton. Prolegom. iii. f. 49. *Origen*, and *St Jerom*, by the best Criticks in that Language. It must indeed be confess'd, that these Vowels could not be so effectual to ascertain the true Reading, as the Points have since been, but whatever defect there might be in the Vowels, it was supplied by constant use and practice, and by some general Rules, which they observed in

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the Reading. The Bible being a Book which by Divine Commandment was so often and carefully read both in publick and private, the Hebrew Text might be exactly read, and the true sense certainly retain'd and known; and it is no wonder, that by constant use and continual practice and custom from their infancy, the Jews could read it with ease and readiness without Points, which is no more than is ordinarily done now by men, who are skilful in that Language, and divers have attain'd to it by their own observation and industry. If there were the more difficulty in the Hebrew Tongue before the invention of Points, there was the more care and study used about it, the Jews having times purposely set apart, for the reading of the Law, studied it with that diligence and exactness, that they knew it as well as they did their own Names, or better. * Josephus expresses it, if that were possible; and they used so great accuracy both in their Pronouncing and Writing, that there could be no danger, that any considerable mistake should be occasioned by any defect in the Vowels, before the Points were found out. *This was a great part of the Jewish Learning, (as † Bishop Walton observes) the true Reading of the Text, and they who were most accurate and exact therein, were honoured most amongst 'em, and had their Schools, and their Scholars and Disciples, whom they instructed from time to time, till at length*

* Joseph. contr. Ap. lib. ii.

† Considerat. c. x. S. 8.

length in regard of their many dispersions and banishments, that the true reading might not be lost with the Language, they began to affix Points to the Text, as well to facilitate the reading, as to preserve it the better from any alteration or change.

But this is an objection, which never could have been made but in the Western parts of the world; for in the East they commonly write yet without points, as the Jews likewise write the Western Languages, where they live, without points, in the Hebrew Character. * The Samaritans still have no points. And † the Children of the Turks, Arabians, and Persians, and generally of all the Mahometans, learn to read without them. * Isaac Vossius says the Asiatics laugh at the Europeans, because they cannot read as they do without Vowels. † Schickard confesses, that he had known Children of seven years of age, read the Pentateuch meerly by use. * Clenard, and Erpenius himself, who was so famous for the Arabick, and other Eastern Languages, both of them declared, that they learned the Arabick only by their own study and diligence from Books without points: and Arpenius had attained to such accuracy in that Language, before he had read any Book with the points, that Isaac Casaubon so far approved of the Translation which he had then made, of the Arabick Nubian Geography into Latin, that he was very earnest with him to publish it. Lud-

* Walt. Prolegom. iii. c. 40. Morin. Epist. 15. & 70. inter Antiquit. Eccl. Orient. † Joseph. Scalig. Epist. 243. * Voss. de Sibyll. Orac. † Walt. Prolegom. iii. f. 50. * Lud. Capel. de Punct. Hebr. An. Equ. lib. ii. c. 27. f. 4, 5, 6

dovicus Capellus besides gives an instance from his own knowledge of one, who when he had scarce been taught the *Arabick* Alphabet, made a great progress in that Tongue in four months, only by his own industry, and without the help of points.

All these things considered, it would be a strange Paradox to pretend, that there is no certainty in the Ancient Eastern way of writing, and that no body can certainly know what their Authors meant, nay, that they did not know one anothers meaning, as well as we do now in our manner of writing, before some certain time, when the points are supposed to be first found out.

II. The change of the Old *Hebrew* Character into that now in use, is no prejudice to the Authority of the *Hebrew* Text. Because this was but the writing over that, which was before in one Alphabet into another, the Language being still the same: and this, if it were done with sufficient care (as we have all the reason in the world to believe it was) could make no material mistakes, and we find it hath not, by the agreement between the *Hebrew* and the *Samaritan Pentateuch* still extant.

III. The *Keri* and the *Kelib*, or the difference in some places between the Text and the Marginal Reading, is no prejudice to the Authority of the Scripture. For as the various Lections of the Bible are much fewer, con-

Considering the Antiquity of it, and the vast numbers of Copies, which have been transcribed in all Ages and Countreys, than those of any other Book: so many of them may be easily reconciled, and the occasion of them as easily discovered. Some of them were occasioned by the likeness of several of the *Hebrew* Letters, which were not easily to be distinguished in Books written in such small Characters, * as St *Jerome* complains were used in writing the *Hebrew* Bibles of his time. Others happen'd from Abbreviations, and some might proceed from Marginal Glosses.

* Hieron. Proem. in Ezech. Comment lib. 8.

It must likewise be observ'd, that all the words we meet with in the Margin of the *Hebrew* Bibles, are not to be look'd upon as various Lections, for divers of them were placed there by the *Jews* out of superstition, because they scrupled to pronounce certain words, and therefore appointed others to be read in their stead. But when the *Jews* were dispersed into divers Countreys, their Dialect or manner of Pronunciation must needs be different, and as the same words were pronounced differently, so they would in time be differently written, which gave one chief occasion to the various Lections in the old Testament, for from the emulation between the Schools of the *Jews* at *Babylon* and those at *Jerusalem*, there arose a set of various Lections under the Title of the *Eastern* and the *Western* Readings, but it is acknowledged, that they † are of no moment, † Vid. Walt. Proleg. 8. S. 28.

ment, and that as to the sense, it is much at one which reading is admitted, for they concern matters of Orthography, rather than of Orthodoxy, as *Buxtorf* speaks; and the *Jews* of *Palestine* and of *Europe*, who follow the Western Readings, yet do not altogether reject the Eastern; but in some editions have printed them both. * The different readings of *Ben Ascher* and *Ben Naphtali* had the same original, the Eastern *Jews* following the one, and the Western observing the other, but these concern the Points and Accents only, and not either the Words or Letters.

There is no Antient Book in the World, of which we can be certain, that we rightly understand it, if it be necessary to the right understanding of a Book, that it be without various Lections; for what Book is there without 'em, or what Book of the same bigness, and of any Antiquity, has so few various Lections as the Bible? and what Book can be Transcribed or Printed, but it is liable to have mistakes made in it.

IV. No difference between the *Hebrew* Text and the *Septuagint*; and other Versions, or between the several Versions themselves, is any prejudice to the Authority of the Scriptures, nor can prove that the *Hebrew* Text was ever different in any thing material from what it is now. The Translation of the *Septuagint* *, as it hath been observed from *St Jerom*, and others, is in many places rather a Comment or Paraphrase than a strict Version, and gives the sense

sense rather than the words of the *Hebrew* Texts. Many times there is supposed to be a difference, where there is none, for want of a sufficient knowledge of the Original, as † *Dr Pocock* has shewn in divers Instances, and *Bp Pearson* in others, besides what has been written by *Isaac Vossius* to this purpose: and one very skilful in the Oriental Tongues, had undertaken to shew the agreement between *Hebrew* and the *Septuagint* throughout, and had made a considerable Progress in the work, as *Bishop Walton* informs us. Other differences proceed from the mistakes of Transcribers, as it must needs happen in Books, of which so many Copies have been taken in all Ages; and from the rashness of Criticks in making unnecessary alterations, or by inserting into the Text such Notes, as were at first placed only for explication in the Margin. In some things of less consequence the Translators might be mistaken, or they might follow a different Copy.

The Authority of the Text of Scripture is greatly confirmed from the citations of the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers, from whence it appears that in the several Ages of the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches, the Copies which they made use of had no such variations from those we now use, as to be of any ill consequence in matters of Religion.

As to the Imputation that was charged upon the *Jews* by some of the Fathers, that they

* Id. Proleg. iv. f. 9.

* Id. Prolegom. ix. f. 12. & x. f. 8.

† *Pocock* Append. ad Port. Mos. c. 1. 2, 3, 4. *Pearf.* Præf. ad Septuag. Edit. Cantab. If. *Voss. de* lxx. Interpret. *Walton* Proleg. ix. 46.

they had corrupted the Scriptures in such places, as according to the Translation of the Septuagint, and the sense of their Ancestors must prove the Truth of the Christian Religion against them; this is to be understood of the Versions of *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, and *Theodosian*, who being all either profest *Jews*, or Judai- zing Hereticks, designed their Translations to countenance their own errors, especially *Aquila*, who undertook his Version, purpose- ly to oppose that of the Septuagint. For it is now generally agreed, that the *Jews* never deserved the Censure of having corrupted the *Hebrew* Text, tho they perverted the sense of it, and where there were various Readings, chose to follow that which was most favou- rable to their own pretences, tho it were in contradiction to the Judgment of their Fore- fathers, as well as the Christians. *Philo* in a discourse cited * by *Eusebius* (who thereby owns the Truth of it) said, that for the space of above two thousand years there had not been a word altered in the Law, but that the *Jews* would chuse to dye never so many deaths rather than they would consent to any thing in prejudice of it. And † *Josephus* declares of the whole Old Testament, that it had suffer- ed no alteration from the beginning down to his own Time. * *Morinus* himself, whatever he hath elsewhere said to the contrary, declares in a Letter to Dr *Comber* Dean of *Carlisle*, that he supposes no man can doubt, but that the

Jewish

Jewish Copies, *ceteris paribus*, are to be prefer- red before any Copies of the *Samaritans*, which he in his Writings so highly magnifies.

It must be acknowledged that the numbring of the Verses and Words and Letters, and the observing which was the middle Letter of e- very Book, could signify little to the securing of the *Hebrew* Text entire, because there may be the same number of Verses, and Words, and Letters in different Books, and the same Number of Letters may make up different Words, and the same Words diversely placed and apply'd, may express a very different sense: nor could there be any charm in a word, that stood in the midst of a Book, to keep all the rest in their proper places. But this scrupulous and even superstitious diligence of the *Jews*, in little things is an evi- dence of their constant study of the Scri- ptures, and of the great value and reve- rence they had for it, so that they would nei- ther corrupt it themselves, nor suffer it to be corrupted by others, but were careful and zealous to preserve every ever letter and tittle; and as I observed before from *Josephus*, they were so well acquainted with it, that he thought he could not fully enough express their skill and accuracy, but by saying that they knew it better than their own names.

V. It is evident, and confest by the Cri- ticks, that neither by these; nor by any other means, any such difference is to be found in the several Copies of the Bible, as to prejudice

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* Euseb.
Præpar.
Evang.
lib. viii.
c. 6.

† Contra
Apion.
lib. i.

* Antiqu.
Eccl. Ori-
ent. Epist.
38.

the fundamental Points of Religion, or weaken the Authority of the Scriptures. All relating to this controversy has been eagerly debated by contending parties, who yet agree in this, whatever they differed in besides, that the various Lections do not invalidate the authority of the Scriptures, nor render them ineffectual to the end and design of a Divine Revelation, inasmuch as all the various Lections taken together, are no prejudice to the Analogy of Faith, nor to any Points necessary to

Salvation. * *Ludovicus Cappellus*, who had studied this subject as much as any man, and was as well able to judge of it, after the strictest examination he could make, found, that the things relating either to Faith or Practice, are plainly contained in all Copies, whatever difference there is in lesser things, as in matters of

Chronology, which depend upon the alteration, or the omission or addition of a Letter, or in the Names of Men, or of Cities or Countreys. But the fundamental Doctrines of Religion are so dispersed throughout the Scriptures, that they could receive no damage nor alteration, unless the whole Scriptures should have been changed, Wherefore not only the most learned Prote-

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stants, but † *Bellarmin* himself, and the best Criticks amongst the Papists have acknowledged, that all things relating to Articles of Faith, and Rules of Life, are delivered intire and uncorrupted in the Scriptures, notwithstanding the various Lections. And

tho some of the *Roman* Communion have endeavoured to prove the necessity of an infallible Church, by Arguments drawn from hence, yet says * *Bishop Walton*, I do not re-

member, that in any particular controversy between them and us, they urge any one place of Scripture, for their cause, upon the uncertainty of the Reading without Points, which plainly shews, that there is no such uncertainty in the Text un-

pointed, as is pretended. † *Simon* complains, that the Catalogues of various Lections are much larger than they ought to be, and that for the most part they are of no moment, and he charges *Cappellus* more than once, with multiplying 'em without Reason. *Morinus* indeed made it his endeavour to lessen the authority of the *Hebrew* Text in favour of the *Septuagint*, and the *Vulgar Latin*, but his Authority is very inconsiderable, when compared with those of the same Communion, who have declared themselves against his opinion. In * the life

of *Morinus*, written by *F. Simon*, there is this Character of *Cappellus* and *Morinus*, that if they

† Cæterum non tanti momenti sunt ejusmodi errores, ut in iis, quæ ad fidem & bonos mores pertinent, Scripturæ Sacræ integritas desideretur. Plerumq; enim tota discrepantia variarum Læctionum in Dictionibus quibusdam posita est, quæ sensum aut parum, aut nihil mutant. *Bellarmin. De Verbo Dei lib. ii. c. 2.*

* Considerator considered, ch. 12. s. 4.

† Hist. Crit. V. T. lib. 3. c. 23.

* Joh. Morin. Vita.

† Non minus ex ijs, quæ supra disputata sunt, planum est, id, quod statim libri primi initio monuimus, & sæpius toto opere inculcavimus, plerasq; omnes, quæ observari & deprehendi in sacris libris possunt, varias Læctiones, levissimi esse ac pene nullius momenti, ut parum admodum interlit, aut vero perinde omnino sit, utram sequaris, sive hanc, sive illam. *Ludovic. Cappel. Crit. Sacr. lib. v. c. 2.*

they be compared as to what they have both written concerning the Bible, *Morinus* shews more learning in his Books, but it is very often not to the purpose, whereas *Cappellus* has more sagacity and judgment, and never wanders from his subject, but proves what he is upon by the strongest Arguments. And as severe as this Censure may seem to be, yet it is justified in effect, by the confession of *Morinus* himself. For he † acknowledgeth to *Buxtorf* that he never thoroughly applied himself to the study of the *Hebrey* Tongue, that he had read nothing in *Hebrew* for 7 years together, and that therefore he did not question, but he had made many mistakes, especially in his *Samaritan* Exercitations, great part of which were written in hast, and he was forc'd to use such a variety of Authors, that he believes it impossible, but that he must have been often mistaken. The Authority of *Morinus* then signifies nothing in prejudice to the *Hebrew* Text. And * *Spinoza* himself has owned, that he could for certain affirm, that he had observed no fault nor various reading, which concerned the Moral Precepts, that cou'd render them obscure or doubtful.

† Epist.
70. inter.
Antiqu.
Eccl. O-
rient.

* Hoc certo affirmare possum me nullam animadvertisse mendam, nec Lectionum varietatem, circa moralia documenta, quæ ipsa obscura aut dubia reddere possunt. Tractat. Theolog. Polit. c. 9.

Bishop *Walton* has with great learning and judgment, summed up the Arguments on all sides, and as † *F. Simon* acknowledgeth, has

† Crit.
Hist. V.
T. lib. 3.
c. 21.

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examined this matter with more exactness than all that had gone before him. His Polyglot Bibles give an ocular demonstration to the truth of what he maintains, that there is nothing of consequence, either as to Faith or Practice, concerned in the difference of the several Copies of the *Hebrew* Text, or of the several Versions. And as many Sects and Divisions as there are amongst Christians, and as many different Translations as they make use of, they all acknowledge the Authority of the originals, and their Translations in the main are the same, however they disagree in rendring some particular passages, which concern the different opinions of the several parties, and upon that account maintain their own Translation to be more correct than others. If we allow of Mr * *Selden's* Judgment, who was very able to make a true one, and far enough from being prejudiced in the case, he says, *the English Translation of the Bible is the best Translation in the world, and renders the sense of the Original best, taking in for the English Translation the Bishop's Bible, as well as King James's.* However, by different Translations, and by comparing divers Copies and Versions to make out the true Reading, many Texts become better understood, and more fully explained, than if there had been but one Reading, and no difference in the Translations.

* Table
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VI. And no less may be said in behalf of the New Testament than of the Old ; for the Books of it were kept from the beginning as a Sacred Treasure, with great care and reverence, and were constantly read in the Christian Assemblies, and soon translated into all Languages. The Primitive Christians chose to undergo any Torments, rather than they would deliver up the Books of Scripture to their Persecutors to be destroyed, and they were no less careful to preserve them uncorrupted by Hereticks. Besides, when Hereticks attempted to corrupt any Text of Scripture to serve their particular Heresies, they were declared against not only by the Orthodox, but by other Hereticks, who were not concerned for those opinions, in behalf whereof the corruption was intended. So that it was impossible for any corruptions to be imposed upon the Church, or to pass undiscovered even by some of the Hereticks themselves. They must be designed for some end, and to authorize some particular Doctrines, and then all, who were not for those Doctrines, and more especially those who were against them, would certainly oppose such corruptions.

The agreement likewise of the *Greek* Text of the New Testament, with the several ancient Versions, and with the quotations found in the Writings of the Fathers, who cited and alledged them from the times of the Apostles, proves that there have been no alterati-
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ons of any such consequence as to make the Scriptures insufficient for the ends of a Divine Revelation. If any man be of another opinion, let him instance in any one Article of Faith, or Rule of Life, which cannot be proved from the Scriptures. It is not enough for him to shew, that some one or more Texts, which have been brought in proof of it, are disputed, but he must shew that it can be proved by no Text, which is clear and undisputed.

The various Lections of the Holy Scriptures are so far from being an Argument against their Authority, that they rather help to prove it, since they are comparatively so few in a Book of so great Antiquity. For no care and regard, inferiour to that, which we must suppose men to have of a Book, which they are convinced is of Divine Authority, could have produced a less variety of Readings in a Book of much less Antiquity. They are all of no consequence to the prejudice of the end and design of a Revelation ; and therefore they come under the number of such Accidents, as God cannot be obliged in his providence to prevent. But the Bible could not without the signal providence of God, have been preserved for so many ages, under so many changes and revolutions, which the Wisdom of God, for reasons elsewhere observed, saw fit to permit, much less could it have escaped with so inconsiderable variati-
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ons, unless it has been secured by a particular providence, from those corruptions and alterations, which are so frequent in Humane Writings.

CHAP. VI.

Of the difficulties in Chronology, in the Holy Scriptures.

Chronology is the part of Learning, which is most nice and difficult to be exactly adjusted, because it depends upon so many several Circumstances, and comprehends so great a variety of affairs in all Ages and Nations, and how punctually soever the accounts of time be set down at first, yet the least alterations in one word or letter may cause a great difference in Copies, and the difference of *Epoches* in the computations of different Countreys, especially at great distances of time as well as place, is such, that the exactest Chronology may easily be mistaken, and may be further entangled and perplexed by those, who endeavour to rectify what they think amiss, for that which was exact at first is often made faulty by him, who thought it so before. But I suppose, that no material exception will lye against the Scripture upon the account of any difficulties in Chronology, if those two things

things be made out. I. That differences in Chronology do not infer uncertainty in the matters of fact themselves. II. That differences in Chronology do not imply, that there was any Chronological mistake made by the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures; but that they have been occasioned by the mistakes of Transcribers or of Expositors.

I. Differences in Chronology do not infer uncertainty in the matters of fact themselves. Because the point of time is but one circumstance, and that easily mistaken by a thousand accidents, and there may be many other circumstances so particular, and so well attested, as to give sufficient evidence to the truth of things related, notwithstanding any uncertainty in the circumstance of Time. For which reason * *Plutarch* did not reject the Relation * *Plut. in Solon.* of a discourse that past between *Solon* and *Cresus*, tho he could not answer the objections brought from Chronology to prove it feign'd, because he found it delivered by good Authors, and saw nothing improbable in it, but every thing very likely and suitable to *Solon's* temper; and he thought it unreasonable to reject a matter of fact, which had no other objection against it, but some difficulties in Chronology; when, says he, innumerable persons have endeavoured to rectify the Chronological Canons, but could never be able to this day to reconcile the differing opinions. The uncertainty of Chronology is a general complaint

plaint made by the best Historians, and therefore if this objection have any weight, it must invalidate the Authority of all History.

A very learned and accurate Author has shewn the uncertainty in Chronology † during the first Monarchy, both in respect of Kingdoms, viz. the Kingdom of Assyria itself, and the Kingdoms contemporary with it, and of Persons and Occurrences. But doth this prove that there never were any such Kingdoms, nor any such Persons and Occurrences? It is uncertain when the City of Rome was first built; for * Salust and others, contrary to the common opinion, that it was founded by Romulus, have ascribed the foundation of it to the Trojans. And † those who make Romulus the Founder, yet are at a strange disagreement concerning the Parents of Romulus, and the time of his Birth. Some have called his Mothers name *Ilia*, some *Rhea*, some *Silvia*, others, as *Livy*, *Rhea Silvia*; yet still there is a further difference about the time of the foundation of the City, which has occasioned great disputes among Chronologers. What then must follow from hence? Why, if the uncertainty of the time when any Fact was done, imply the uncertainty of the Fact itself, we must fairly conclude, that it is uncertain whether Rome was ever built at all, or at least we must, with * *Temporarius* believe, that there never was any such man as *Romulus*. The

† Mr Milner's Defence of A. Bishop Usher.

* Salust. Bell. Catalan.

† Plutarch. in Romulo.

* Temporar. Chron. Demonstr. lib. iii.

Copies

Copies of *Diogenes Laertius* place the Time of *Epicurus's* Death 9 years before he was born, as * *Menagius* has observed; but the enemies of Religion have too great a value for *Epicurus*, to give him up for that Reason, and to conclude that there never was such a man. But it is yet more strange that the time of so late and so remarkable a thing as the taking of *Constantinople* by the *Turks* should be placed by some a year sooner than by others. This was an Action known and discoursed of throughout all *Europe*, and is a pregnant Instance, how little Reason there is to dispute the certainty of a Thing from any uncertainty of Time, if other Circumstances concur to assure us of the Truth of it. *The Chronologers are not a little ashamed*, says Mr Gregory, *that they should not be able to satisfy us, concerning so late and famous a calamity as the Siege of Constantinople by Mahumed the Second.*

* Menag. observ. in Diog. Laert.

Jo. Greg. de Aetis & Epochis. c. 3.

II. The differences in Chronology do not imply, that there was any Chronological mistake made by the Pen-men of the Holy Scriptures, but they arise from the mistakes of Transcribers or Expositors. To be convinced of this we need only reflect a little upon some of those things, which are apt to cause mistakes in the Computations of Chronology; and it will soon appear, how unreasonable it is to imagine, that no Book can be of Divine Inspiration, which is not fitted to secure men from

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the errors, which it is natural for them to commit in things of that intricacy.

I. Many difficulties in Chronology are occasioned by not observing, that that which had been said before in the general is afterwards resumed and delivered in the particulars contained under it. For the total sum of any term of years being set down first, before the particulars have been insisted upon and explained, has led some into mistakes, by supposing, that the particulars afterwards mentioned were not to be comprehended in it, but to be reckoned apart, as if they had happened afterwards in order of Time, because they are last related in the course of the History. Thus *Gen. xi. 26.* it is said that *Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram*; and *vers. 32.* that *the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.* But *Gen. xii. 4.* it is written that *Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran:* which is inconsistent, if we suppose that *Abram* lived in *Haran* till the Death of his Father *Terah*: but if we consider that the whole number of years which *Terah* lived is set down *Gen. xi. 32.* and that the departure of *Abram* out of *Haran*, which is related *Gen. xii.* yet happened before his Father's Death, there will be no inconsistency; but it will be evident, if *Terah* was but seventy years old when *Abram* was begotten, and *Abram* was but seventy five years old when he went out of

of *Haran*, that *Abram* left his Father *Terah* in *Haran*, where he lived after *Abram's* departure from him to the age of two hundred and five years. Tho' during his Father's life he did upon occasion return to *Haran*. For the final removal of *Abram* was not till the death of his Father, as we learn from *Acts vii. 4.* And if this way of relating that in General first, which is afterwards set forth in the Particulars, be attended to in the Interpretation of the Scriptures, it will afford a Solution of many difficulties; as * *St Austin* has observed, which otherwise are inexplicable. Others suppose *Abram* was the youngest of *Terah's* Sons, tho' mentioned first, and then there is no difficulty in the Chronology; only by this and other instances we may observe that the eldest Brother is not always placed first in Scripture, but sometimes the youngest, out of respect to him, for his favour with God, and his greater dignity and worth: and therefore whatever difficulties in Chronology arise upon this supposition, that the Son first named must therefore necessarily be first born, proceed from a mistake.

2. Sometimes the principal number is set down, and the odd or lesser number is omitted, which being added to the great or principal number in some other place, causes a difference not to be reconciled, but by considering that it is customary in the best Authors

not always to mention the lesser numbers, where the matter doth not require it. And we have evident proof of this in the Scriptures. The time of the sojourning of the children of *Israel* in the land of *Canaan*, and of their dwelling in *Egypt* is said to be the space of four hundred years, *Gen. xv. 13. Acts vii. 6.* which yet was in all four hundred and thirty years, *Exod. xii. 40. Galat. iii. 17.* The *Israelites*, who came out of *Egypt*, are computed to be *six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty*, *Num. i. 46. ii. 32.* but *Moses* speaking of them, *Num. xi. 21.* leaves out the three thousand and five hundred and fifty. *Jerubbual* or *Gideon* is said to have had *threescore and ten* Sons by his Wives, besides *Abimelech*, whom he had by a Concubine, *Judg. viii. 30, 31.* and *Abimelech* is often said to have slain these threescore and ten brethren, tho *Jotham* the youngest of them is at the same time said to have escaped, *Judg. ix. 5, 18, 24, 56.* The *Benjamites* that were slain, *Judg. 20. 35.* are said to be *twenty and five thousand and an hundred men*, whereas *vers. 46.* they are reckoned only twenty and five thousand men. *1 Cor. xv. 5.* we read that our Saviour was *seen of Cephas, then of the twelve*, tho *St Matthias* was not chosen into the number of the Apostles till after the Ascension of Christ, and *St Mark* says precisely that *he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat*, *Mark*

xvi.

xvi. 14. Thus in Heathen Authors the *Trojan* * Fleet is said to consist of a thousand Ships, whereas *Homer* makes them two hundred more, as † *Thucydides* reckons them, or one hundred sixty six, by his Scholiasts counting, but the Historian did not care to be so punctual. The Judges stiled *Centumviri* amongst the *Romans*, were at first five more than an hundred, and afterwards * al-^{Plin. lib. vi. Epist.} most twice that number, yet still they retained the same name, as the *LXXII*. Interpreters are commonly stiled the *Septuagint*. Since therefore it is manifest, that the lesser Number are sometimes omitted both in the Old and New Testament, as well as in other Authors, and the principal and greater numbers, whether more or less than the precise Calculation, are only set down, and at other times the lesser numbers are specified, it is reasonable to make abatements for this in adjusting the accounts of Chronology.

3. Sometimes an *Epocha* may be mistaken by Chronologers: as *Gen. vi. 3.* *And the Lord said my Spirit shall not always strive with man: for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.* But from *Gen. v. 32.* compared with *Gen. viii. 13.* the Flood must happen but an hundred years after these words seem to have been spoken: tho if we compute not from the time, when this was threatned,

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* Si, inquam, Numerus non est ad amissim; ut non est, cum dicimus mille naves iisse ad Trojam, centumvirale esse iudicium Romæ. Varro de Re Rust. lib. ii. c. 1.

† Thucyd. lib. i. c. 10.

* al-^{Plin. lib. vi. Epist.} most twice that number, yet still they retained the same name, as the *LXXII*. Interpreters are commonly stiled the *Septuagint*.

but from the beginning of Man's Apostacy, which we may suppose then to have been already Twenty years, there will be no difficulty in it. Or else the Threatning, tho placed after it, might be denounced Twenty years before the Five hundredth year of Noah's Age, which falls under the observation above-mentioned of St *Austin*. † St *Jerom* indeed says that the time allowed mankind for Repantance was shortned for their Contumacy, and the Flood was brought upon the World twenty years sooner than was designed, if their Provocations had not hastned it.

4. Variations in Chronology may sometimes proceed from the likeness of two words, which occasioned the writing the one for the other. Thus *Acts* xiii. 20. some read, *ὡς ἦσαν τὰ τετρακιστόσια*, not *ἦσαν τετρακιστόσια*. Some famous Copies, from whence most others now remaining may have been transcribed, might happen to be uncorrect in some of these less material parts of Scripture: the Numeral Letters were easily mistaken, as we see our Figures now are; and when they numbred by Letters, mistakes might the oftner happen, because the Transcribers might unawares write down a Letter of the foregoing or following Word instead of the true Numeral Letter, when there was any likeness between them; and the *Hebrew* Letters being some of them so very much alike, might be a readier occasion of mistake. This change of Numeral Letters some think to have

occasioned the difficulty concerning the Age of *Abazia* son of *Jehoram* King of *Judah*, when he began to Reign, *2 Kings* viii. 26. *2 Chron.* xxii. 2. And that such mistakes have been made in Transcribing the Septuagint is evident, because the several Copies of that Version have different accounts of Chronology, and they also differ from the Copies made use of by *Africanus* and *Eusebius*. Mistakes of this kind are very * common in all

Greek and *Latin* Authors, and to prevent this inconvenience, Mr *Greaves* acquaints us, that the Emperour *Ulug Beg*, Nephew to *Tamerlane* the Great, † in his *Astronomical Tables* (the most accurate of any in the East) has expressed the numbers of the principal Epocha's, first in Words, at length and again in Figures, and then a third time in particular Tables: whose example this excellent Author alledgeth for his own exactness in describing the dimensions of the Pyramids after the same manner; supposing it very improbable, if any one of these Accounts should happen to be altered, that two of them should not agree, and that those two which agree, shall not express the true number.

5. In some places the Alterations, which

† Hieron.
Qu. in
Genes.

* Error fortasse ex notis ortus—nusquam non isto modo in bonis utriusq; Linguae Scriptoribus est peccatum. Casaub. ad Theoph. Charac. Proem. Sed non dubito Librorum potius negligentia, praesertim tot jam seculis intercedentibus veritatem fuisse corruptam, quam ut Propheta erraverit. Sicut in hoc ipso nostro opusculo futurum credimus, ut describentium incuria, quae non incuriose a nobis sunt digesta, vitientur. Sulpic. Sever. Hist. Sacr. lib. 1. c. 70.
† Greaves Pyramidogr.

cause the differences in the Chronology of the Septuagint from that of the *Hebrew* Text are so uniform, that they could not be made but by design of some Transcribers, or of the Translators themselves. For instance, in the Lives of the five first Patriarchs, and of *Enoch* the * seventh they, add an hundred years before their having children, and deduct the same number of years from the time they lived afterwards: which is conjectured to have been done, because they supposed that by years there, are to be understood Lunar years or months, and so they altered the Chronological account of their Lives. For if those be the years meant by the *Hebrew* account, they must have been Fathers of children at 5, 6, 7, or 8 years of Age. Another conjecture is, that it might be supposed, that as Mens lives were longer then, so the Age at which they were capable of Marriage must not be the same that it is now, but must bear proportion to the length of their Lives, and therefore they altered the Chronology to make the Patriarchs fathers of children at such an Age, as might answer to the Age at which men are capable of having children in these latter times.

The mention of *Cainan*, the son of *Arphaxad*, both in the Version of the Septuagint and in the Gospel of St *Luke*, tho it be not in the *Hebrew*, is a matter of greater Difficulty. But Bishop * *Walton* notwithstanding saw sufficient Reason to conclude however, with such

* Vid.
Ludovic.
Capell.
Chron.
Sacri.

* Prole-
gom. ix. f.
6. &c.

such caution and candor as became so great a Judgment, that the Septuagint followed the *Hebrew* Copies of those times: and the Answers to the Arguments brought to prove the contrary, have since been considerably enforced by the Learned † *Isaac Vossius*.

There is reason to believe that the *Hebrew* and the *Samaritan* Account were the same * in St *Jerom's* time, and that the difference between them has happened since.

6. The Son often reigning with the Father, his Reign is sometimes put down as commencing from his Partnership with his Father in the Kingdom, and in other places from his Reigning alone after his Fathers decease. Thus the difficulties are explained concerning the beginning of the Reigns of *Jehoram* King of *Israel* Son of *Abah*, and *Jehoram* King of *Judah* Son of *Jehosaphat*, 2 *Kings*. i. 17. iii. 1. For it is said expressly that *Jehosaphat* being then King of *Judah*, *Jehoram* the Son *Jehosaphat* King of *Judah* began to Reign, 2 *Kings* viii. 16. It is likewise manifest, that *Jehoash* the Son of *Jehoahaz* King of *Israel* must reign with his Father 3 years, 2 *Kings* xiii. 1, 10. This is also applyed in the explication of other Questions by St * *Jerom*. The Reign of *Azariah* is computed from his taking the Government upon himself at sixteen years of Age in the 27th year of *Jeroboam* King of *Israel*; for then he is said to begin to reign, 2 *Kings* xv. i. whereas his Father *Amaziah* lived but

† Castigat.
ad Script.
Georg.
Horn. c.

* Siqui-
dem & in
Hebræis
& Samari-
tanorum
libris ita
scriptum
reperi. Et
vixit Ma-
thufala,
&c. Hie-
ron.

Quæst. in
Gen. vid.
& Capell.
Chron.
Sacri.

* Hieron.
ad vital.

to

to the 15th year of *Jeroboam's* Reign, 2. *King.* xiv. 17. In the Kingdom of *Israel* there was a long Interregnum between *Jeroboam* the second and *Zachariah*, 2 *Kings* xiv. 23. xv. 8. Some assign a threefold computation of the years of *Nebuchadnezzar's* reign, the first from his laying Siege to *Jerusalem*, the second from his taking it, and the beginning of the captivity, the third from his entire Monarchy after the conquest of *Egypt*. Others assign two beginnings of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Reign, the one from his coming with his Army into *Syria*, during the Life of his Father, the other from his Father's death.

7. The Terms of Time in Computation are sometimes taken inclusively, and at other times exclusively, *Matt.* xvii. 1. we read, *After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his Brother, and bringeth them up into an high Mountain apart*; and in like manner, *Mark* ix. 2. But this is said *Luke* ix. 28. *to come to pass about an eight days after*; which is very consistent with what the other Evangelists write. For *St Matthew* and *St Mark* speak exclusively, reckoning the six days between the time of our Saviours discourse, which they there relate, and his Transfiguration; but *St Luke* includes the day in which he had that discourse with his Disciples, and the day of his Transfiguration, and reckons them with the six intermediate days. The *Rabbins* * also observe, that the very first day of a year may stand

stand in computation for that year: and by this way of reckoning, mistakes of years *current* for years *complete*, or years *complete* for years *current*, in the successions of so many Kings, and the Transactions of affairs for so long a time, may amount to a considerable number of years. For this reason † *Thucydides* says he computes the years of the *Peloponnesian* War, not by the Magistrates yearly chosen during that time, but by so many Summers and Winters.

These, and several other ways, by which Disputes in Chronology may be occasioned, are a sufficient Argument to us, that they do not imply, that there were originally Chronological Mistakes in the Books themselves. And if they might so many ways arise without any error in the Original Writings; if the same difficulties occur upon so very nice and intricate a subject in all Books in the World, and it could be by no means necessary, that Books of Divine Authority should be either at first so penned, as to be liable to no wrong Interpretations, or be ever after preserved by Miracle from all corruption, it is great rashness to deny the Divine Authority of the Scriptures upon the account of any difficulties in Chronology.

C H A P. VII.

Of the Obscurity of some Places in the Scriptures, particularly of the Types and Prophecies.

Here it must in the first place be remembered, that it has been a common and true observation, that all Authors are rather perplex'd and obscured, than explained by a multitude of Commentators; and this is so true of no Book as of the Scriptures: for as none has had so many Glosses and Comments put upon it by men of all Ages and Nations; so most of them endeavour to find out some new Explication, or to serve a Cause; and maintain some particular opinions by their Expositions. So that, it is a wonder that any part of the Scriptures should be clear, after Volumes have been written, I may truly say, upon every Text; rather than that difficulties should be found in them. But at the same time it must be acknowledged, that we find it declared in the Scriptures themselves, that there are places of difficulty in them: which makes it but so much the more unreasonable that this should be urged as an objection against them. For what is acknowledged and profest, must be suppos'd to be with a design, and

and for some good reason, and the reason and design ought to be inquired into, before this be used as an objection. St Peter speaking of Christ's coming to Judgment says, that St Paul in his Epistles had delivered *some things hard to be understood*; and St Paul himself intimates, that there had been mistakes concerning what he had written in this matter, *2 Thess. ii. 1, 2, 3.* St Peter on this occasion says, that it so happened not only to St Paul's Epistles, but to other Books of the Scriptures, thro the ignorance and rashness of *unlearned and unstable men*, *2 Pet. iii. 16.* And it happens more especially in those places of Scripture, which are concerning things of this nature, or contain whatever Prophecies of things to come. Therefore I shall, I. give an account how it comes to pass, that there are things hard to be understood in the Scriptures in general. II. I shall in particular consider the obscurity of Prophecies, and shall prove the certainty of the Types made use of by the Prophets, and shew that there is great force and evidence in the Arguments brought from them. III. I shall prove that the obscurity of some places of the Scriptures is no prejudice to the Authority of them, nor to the end and design of them.

I. I shall give an account in general, how it comes to pass, that there are some things in the Scriptures hard to be understood.

i. Some

i. Some Doctrines, which it mightily concerns us to be acquainted withal, could not be delivered in so plain a manner, but that they must needs have great difficulties in them, as the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, of the Incarnation of Christ, of the Resurrection, and of the Joys of Heaven and of the Torments of Hell. There are several things which we are capable of knowing, and which are necessary to be known, of which yet we cannot have so perfect and absolute a knowledge, but that something of them will still remain unknown to us. As there is no object more visible, or better known to us than the Sun is; but to calculate the dimensions and the distance of the Sun from us, to know how its light is communicated, and suddenly spread over the face of the Earth, are things of great difficulty, and can never perhaps be fully accounted for: In like manner, what the Scriptures deliver to us concerning the Nature of God, and the state of the World to come, must needs have difficulties in it, tho' we are never so well assured that there is a God and a future state; because these are things above our understandings; we may perfectly understand that there are such things, but can have no full and clear conception of all that may be fit to be delivered to us concerning them. Nothing can be made plainer to us, than we are capable of knowing it, or than the Nature of it, and the

pro-

portion our Faculties bear to it, will allow. God being incomprehensible, whatever is delivered concerning him, can never be without all difficulty, and whilst we are in this world, we can never understand the state of the next so fully, as we shall do hereafter. And these are difficulties which must be, unless the Nature of the things, or our own Nature were different from what it is.

Nevertheless, the greatest Mysteries in the Christian Religion, so far as they are revealed, and so far as they are required to be known by us, contain no inexplicable difficulties: but if we will needs know more of the Mysteries of Religion than is revealed, and more than is required to be known, no wonder if we meet with difficulties. What is meant, for instance, by the Doctrine of the Trinity, is capable of being very well understood, as the opposers of this Doctrine must own, unless they will confess, that they oppose they know not what. He that says a thing is not true, knows what it is which he pretends not to be true, if he understands what he says. The thing then is known, tho' there be difficulties in the explication, but the explication concerns the manner of existence, not the truth of it. For that may certainly be, and we may certainly know it to be, which yet we know not how it should be. And the Doctrine itself only is revealed, as necessary to be believed, not any particular explication of it. And if it can be

proved,

proved, that this is the Doctrine of Scripture, and it be plain to be understood what is meant by this Doctrine, as it is delivered in Scripture, this shews the plainness of the Christian Religion in all things necessary to Salvation, tho' divers things relating to this Doctrine be difficult to be explained, because the Doctrine is plainly enough and intelligibly delivered, so far as it is required to be understood and believed.

Several Arts and Sciences, which are very difficult and abstruse in the Theory, are easy in the Practice, and a man may very well understand what the *Theorem* itself is, which is to be proved, tho' he be altogether incapable of understanding the proof of it. Now, what God says, is as certain as any demonstration can be, and what he has plainly delivered, is plain as well as certain; and it is never the less certain or plain, because we cannot make out the proof of it, nor are able to understand how it can be. It is sufficient that the Scriptures are plain in this Doctrine, so far as we are concerned to know it; it is not necessary that the Doctrine itself should be plain in all the controversies, which may be raised about it: when we know the meaning, we must take Gods word for the Truth of it. The manner of the distinction of Persons and the Unity of Essence in the Godhead is not required to be believed, but the Thing, and we know the Thing to be so, because God him-

himself has said it, tho' we can know nothing of the manner of it. We know the Proposition, which is to be believed, tho' we cannot make good the Proof of it in the way of natural Reasoning, but only from the Authority of the Revealer, which is of it self sufficient, and ought to be instead of all other Reasons to us.

2. Some parts of the Scriptures were fitted and accommodated to former Ages, and were more proper and useful for them, than if they had been written in such a manner, as to be less obscure and difficult. We may well imagine, that many parts of the Scriptures must have been more peculiarly adapted to their use and advantage, for whom they were immediately designed: and the Learning and Wisdom of ancient Times consisted in Parables and Proverbs and obscure Forms of Speech, in *Prophecies*, in *Subtil and Dark Parables*, and in *the secrets of grave Sentences*, *Eccl. xxxix. 1, 2, 3.* And it was foretold of the *Messias* in particular, that he should speak in Parables, as a matter of great excellency. *I will open my mouth in a Parable, I will utter dark sayings of old, Ps. lxxviii. 2. Matt. xiii. 35.* This was in Ancient Times the Language of Courts, and the properest way of Address to Kings. *Nathan* the Prophet, and the woman of *Te-koa* came to *David* with a Parable, *2 Sam. xii. 1. xiv. 4.* And *Jehoash* King of *Israel* sent a Message of the same nature to *Amaziah* King of

of Judah, 2 Kings xiv. 9. and Cyrus* answers the petition of two Nations at once to him in a short Parable. To understand a Proverb, and the Interpretation, the words of the wise, and their dark sayings, was the best description that Solomon himself could give of Wisdom, Prov. i. 6. And * Solomon and Hiram are related by Josephus to have propounded Problems and Riddles or Parables to each other, upon condition of a forfeiture to be paid by him who could not explain the Riddle sent him. This would be looked upon now as a strange correspondence between Kings; but then it was otherwise thought of; many of their Epistles were preserved, as he tells us, to his time at Tyre; and the Heathen Historians, whose Testimonies he produceth, thought it deserved their particular observation. This custom of propounding Riddles was as old as Sampson's time, Judg. xiv. 12. and examples of the same nature are to be seen in Herodotus † and other Authors. Whether it be true or false that Homer died of grief, because he could not explain the Riddle of the Fishers, it shews that Riddles were in great request amongst the Ancient Greeks: for otherwise there could have been no ground either for the Truth or Fiction of such a story. Plutarch relates it, as the true cause of Homer's death; and when † Herodotus denies this, he owns the Report; and by the Verses, which he says Homer spoke upon this occasion, it ap-
pears

* Herod. lib. i. c. 141.

* Joseph. Antiqu. lib. viii. c. 2. & Contr. Apion. lib. 1.

† Vid. Athenæ. lib. x. c. 15. &c.

* Herod. & Plut. in Vit. Homer.

pears what opinion Homer had of this sort of Wit. Hesiod is by * Quintilian thought the Author of the Fables, which pass under the name of Æsop; however, this makes it probable that he did write Fables, and perhaps there were few men of Learning and note in those times, who did not.

Mythology was in the highest esteem amongst the Ancients, and indeed all the Ancient Learning was of this kind. The Ægyptians, who were in great Reputation for Learning, delivered their Notions in Hieroglyphicks, as if they had resolved not to be understood. And the Philosophers of old, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, &c. greatly affected obscurity. Socrates himself, and Plato and Aristotle purposely concealed their meaning in many cases from vulgar capacities: and Thucydides took the same course in his History, and was obscure out of design, as Marcellinus has observed in his life. The Books of the Old Testament for the most part seem to have been the most plain, and the most easily intelligible of any Writings of ancient times; and they could not have been more obvious, but they must have been contemptible and useless to those for whom they were immediately designed. The precepts and exhortations are always plain and obvious, and the obscurity of other things is so far from being an exception to the Books of Scripture, that it was necessary according to the Learning and Customs of ancient times.

† Quintil. Institut. lib. v. c. xi.

The Reasonableness and Certainty

The Parables of our Blessed Saviour are explained to us, and there can now be no pretence of obscurity in them; and in his Discourses with the *Jews*, to whom they were not explained, he alluded to those Proverbs and Customs, which were best known and most in use among them, to whom upon any occasion he spoke; that thereby all, who *had ears to hear*, and were not by their sins hindered from attending to what they heard, might be the more affected with them, and the better inclined to give themselves up to his Instructions, when they heard him make use of such Allusions, as they knew, according to the way of teaching amongst them, had some excellent hidden meaning, which they would be very desirous to become acquainted withal.

3. Many places of Scripture, which are obscure to us, were not obscure in the ages in which they were written. (1.) Because the obscurity for the most part is rather in the form and manner of Speech, than in the notions themselves; so that that might be clear at first, which is obscure to us, who are but little acquainted with the Phrases and Idioms of the Language, and the Eloquence of those Times and Countries. For the Fashions of Speech vary as much as those of the Garb and Habit, and the Eloquence and ways of Expression are as different, as the Dialects and Languages of divers Ages and Nations. (2.) The names of Ani-

Animals, of Flowers and Plants and Minerals are very liable to be mistaken, and especially whatever is peculiar to any Country, must needs be difficult to be understood by Foreigners, who have no such things among them, and perhaps want words to express their Nature, and can scarce have a true and exact notion of them. The precise value of Coins, and proportion of Weights and Measures used so long ago, and in Countreys so far from ours, can hardly now be known, and must necessarily admit of great variety of opinions: there is much uncertainty about these in all ancient History, but the great Antiquity of the *Jewish* History above others may make us reasonably expect to find many more such difficulties in it, and the different Names of the same Persons, and of the same Places in the Scriptures is another occasion of obscurity. The Names, Coins, Weights, and Measures, and Habits of ancient times afford the greatest work for Criticks, which were so well known, when the Authors who mention them, wrote, that it had been ridiculous for them to explain them. These are difficulties of that Nature, that they could not be avoided, but by the care and concernment of an extraordinary providence, and they are of so little moment, that it could not be expected, that God should particularly concern himself to prevent them.

(3.) The Penmen of the Scriptures, in their Proverbs or Parables, often allude to Customs, or to things, that happened in those times, in which they lived, that were then commonly known, but being unknown now, may well make many places of their Writings obscure to us, which were not so to those of their own time. This is alledged as the

* Obscuritates inquit sex Cæsilii, non assignemus culpæ Scribentium, sed incitiæ non assequentium: quanquam hi quoq; ipsi, qui quæ Scripta sunt, minus percipiunt, culpa vacant. Nam longa ætas verba atq; mores veteres oblitavit, quibus verbis moribusque sententia legum comprehensa est. A. Gell. lib. xx. c. 1.

reason of the obscurity * of the Laws of the Twelve Tables among the *Romans*, at the distance of less than seven hundred years after their first being enacted. And thus it is in all Books of Antiquity, especially in such Books as have frequent occasion to

hint at things so notorious at the time when they were written, that it was needless to give any particular account of them. This has made Notes and Comments necessary upon all Ancient Books, and those places need them most, which treat of things formerly so well known, that the Authors did not think fit to insist upon them, but supposed them, and only alluded to them, rather than exprest or explained them. For which reason we owe the Informations which we have of the *Roman* Antiquities chiefly to *Greek*, Authors, because it had been absurd for *Romans*, writing to men of their own City and Nation, to acquaint them with the customs

stoms of *Rome*, which they knew as well as themselves; but those things were proper for Foreigners to take notice of, for the information of Foreigners. And whatever Allusions, either in Parables or otherwise, are made to such things, must needs be difficult to us, because whatever is thus spoken with reference to any thing, can be known no better than the thing itself; and that which served for an Illustration at the first Writing, renders the sense obscure, when the thing used for Illustration, becomes unknown. Nothing is more generally known than the proverbial Sayings of a Nation, to the people of it; but there is nothing that needs more explication to Foreigners. And these Sayings are very frequent both in the discourses of our Saviour, and throughout the whole Scriptures: for they are the most significant and instructive way of Discourse, and the most easily apprehended by such as are used to them. The use of Proverbs is natural to all Nations, and they are the result of the experience and observation of any people: So that the most effectual and readiest way of Instruction is to apply these Sayings generally known and received, to particular cases and occasions. But then these commonly depend upon the customs of a people, or upon some History, or particular Accident, and oftentimes are taken up at first upon small occasions, and the intention and signification of them is apt to be forgotten,

or mistaken in future Age, or by other Nations. And therefore all places of Scripture, exprest in Allegorical or Proverbial Forms of Speech, or by Types and Resemblances of things, must needs have been better understood in those times, when they were written, than they are now, because we have but an imperfect Notion of many things, to which the Allusion is made, or from whence the similitude is taken, and the very thing which makes them now obscure to us, made them the more plain and intelligible to them, who lived at the time of their being written.

* Maim.
More Ne-
voch.
Præf.

(4.) *Maimonides* * lays this down as a fundamental Rule of the explication of the Scripture, that we should attend to the main Scope any Design of Parables, and not insist upon every word and circumstance, which is added to make them more Natural, but not as any necessary part of them. And in those Ages, when Prophecies were so frequent, and Types and Allegories so constantly made use of, they had certain Rules and Methods † of Interpretation, as we learn from *Josephus*, which thro length of time and the corruption of succeeding Ages are now lost. And it is certain, that the *Jews* in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles were often confused and silenced by them with the Application of Types and Prophecies, which were then acknowledged to belong to the

Mes-

† Joseph.
Bell. Jud.
lib. iii. c.
14.

Messias, and were ever so understood by the *Jews*, but would scarce be understood so by us, if we did not find them thus interpreted and apply'd.

We see then, that the obscurity of many places of Scripture proceeds from the length of Time, and other accidents, and that therefore it could not be prevented, unless God should make a New Revelation to every Age and Nation of the World: which yet would be of little effect to those, who will not be convinced nor perswaded by that Revelation which we have in the Scriptures. Tho the Scriptures were designed for the Benefit and Instruction of all Ages and Nations, yet they often had a more direct and immediate Regard to the Age and Nation, in which they were first penned. We have nothing left but the Names of most of the Historians, mentioned by *St Jerom* as necessary to be read in order to explain the Prophecies of *Daniel*, and many objections made against the Scriptures would have no pretence, if we knew the circumstances of affairs, and had a compleat History of those times, to which they relate; but God having given us full evidence, that the Scriptures are written by his Appointment and Direction, expects to be believed upon his word, and has not thought fit to gratify the curiosity of men, who will disbelieve it. And if men will use any tolerable care and diligence, the Sense and Importance

portance of the Scriptures may be so far understood as is needful, in all Times, whatever difficulties there may be in some particular passages.

II. I shall consider more particularly the obscurity of Prophecies, and shall shew what certainty there is in the Types made use of by the Prophets.

I. As for any differences, which are to be met with in the Interpretation of Prophecies, they may proceed partly from the Infirmities and Passions of humane Nature, by which it comes to pass, that when men undertake to write upon any subject, they are seldom satisfied with what others have said before them, but are for seeking out some New Interpretation of their own: And partly from the difficulty of fixing the particular and precise time of Actions. But this is no more an objection against Prophecies, than it is against the Truth of all History; and we may as well conclude, that things never came to pass, because learned men differ about the time of their being done, as that they were never prophesied of, for the same reason. Expositors may differ in the niceties of the Chronological part, but in the main they are agreed, and whoever will be at the pains to consult them, may be greatly confirmed in the Truth of the Prophecies, upon this very consideration, that there is less difference in the explication of the Principal Prophecies, than there is in the

the Comments upon most Histories; and that those who differ in other matters, must have the greater evidence for that in which they do agree. Tho there be some difficulty and variety of opinion in the calculation of the precise time, when some Prophecies were fulfilled, because it is disputed where the computation is to begin, or how some other circumstance is to be understood; yet all Expositors are agreed concerning these very Prophecies that they are fulfilled. For instance; it is certain that the Scepter is departed from *Judah*, whether that Prophecy be to be understood of the Tribe of *Judah*, or the *Jewish* Nation denominated from that Tribe, it is certain, that the City and Sanctuary are destroyed, and the Sacrifice and Oblation taken away, tho Interpreters do not agree about the precise time and manner of the accomplishment of every particular. Plain matter of Fact shews that the Prophecy is fulfilled, and there is no difficulty but about a Circumstance; and to doubt of the fulfilling of Prophecies, because we do not certainly know the exact time when every particular was fulfilled, tho we certainly know that they must have been all long since fulfilled, is as unreasonable as if a man should question the Truth of History upon the account of Uncertainties in Chronology. What man doubts whether there were such a man as *Homer*, because it is uncertain when he lived? or whether there

ever

ever were a *Trojan War*, because the time of the taking of *Troy* has been variously determined? And yet is there not as much reason to reject this, or any other History, which has occasioned disputes in point of time, as there can be to doubt of the truth of *Daniel's* Predictions, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, because there may be matter of controversy in explaining his *seventy Weeks*? The Prophecy it self is plain, and the Accomplishments certain, however men may differ in assigning the *Epocha* of time. History relates what has come to pass, and Prophecy foretells what shall come, and our uncertainty in point of Time no more affects the Credibility of the one than of the other. We may be uncertain of the time foretold by the Prophet, and as uncertain of the time mentioned by the Historian, but when all other Circumstances agree, there is no reason why our uncertainty as to the single Circumstance of Time should be alledged against the Credibility of either of them. But the Obscurity arising from the difficulties in Chronology is spoken of in the former Chapter.

2. Some Prophecies were purposely obscure, because they did not so nearly concern the Age, in which they were delivered, but were designed not so much for the information of preceeding Ages, as for the confirmation of Posterity in the Truth of Religion, when they see them fulfilled. God doth not

send

send Revelations to gratify the curiosity of men, in acquainting them with what shall befall their Posterity, but rather conceals the knowledge of future events from men, because the knowledge of them might have an ill effect, in making them proud, or careless and negligent; or else too solicitous and concerned about what was to befall their Posterity. The Judgments and Afflictions of Parents would be so much abated if they had a clear prospect of the happiness of their Posterity, that they would lose that effect, which God designs by sending his Judgments. And a perfect view of the miseries, which were to befall the Posterity of the most happy Parents, would render the Blessings of God the less Blessings to them. So that both the Rewards and Punishments of this life would very much lose their force and effect, if Prophecies were less obscure than they are. It is a sufficient Reason for the obscure and mysterious delivering of some Prophecies, that they thereby serve to prove the Faith and Patience, and excite the Care and Watchfulness of men: for which reason, the day of Judgment, and the day of every man's Death is concealed from us, because the particular and distinct Revelation of these things would cause security in some and despair in others; and the case is the same as to the destruction of Churches and Nations: We are commanded to

watch

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watch and pray, *watch ye therefore, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping, and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch,* Mark xiii. 35. Which in the direct sense of the words concerns *Jerusalem*, but the reason of them will extend to the destruction of any other City, or to any other judgment which God has foretold, but has concealed the time or other circumstances, either by silence or by uncertain and mysterious forms of Speech. A full prospect of Prosperity to come oftentimes has proved fatal to men: *Jeroboam, Hazael, and Jehu*, were the worse probably for the Declarations made to them; as *Achithophel*, if it had been foretold plainly what would befall him, would in all likelihood sooner have hastened his own death. Whether therefore the event be good or bad, and whether it concern our selves or our Posterity, it is fit most times that it should not be clearly revealed to us, because this would in great measure exclude the exercise of the Graces of Faith and Hope, and Patience in men, under their present condition. And at the time of fulfilling the Prophecies, which are now most obscure, such a continued Train and Series of Affairs, with all their Circumstances and Particularities, may appear in so full and undeniable evidence, as may convince Infidels, and confirm Believers in the truth of the Predictions, and of the Religion taught by the Prophets, by whom the events were foretold.

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(3.) Obscurity was necessary in some Prophecies, at the * Fathers observe, because without a constant Miracle to preserve them, they would otherwise have been lost, and would never have been delivered down to Posterity. Of this Nature are some of those Prophecies, which relates to our Saviour's state of Humiliation, his Poverty, and Crucifixion and Death, to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the rejection of the *Jews*, which by the Circumstances are manifest to us in the Accomplishment, but were written with some obscurity to conceal them from the obstinate and malicious *Jews*, that seeing they might see and not perceive: for if they had fully understood the scope and importance of them, they would have endeavoured rather to have suppressed and destroyed them, than they would have suffered them to remain to be urged against themselves. A People who were so wholly possessed with the Notion and Expectation of a Temporal *Messias*, would have rejected those Prophecies which set forth his Humiliation and Crucifixion, if they had been expressed in plainer terms. They would have spared Christ no more in the Prophecies of him than in his Person.

Again, Obscurity was necessary, because some events could never have been brought to pass, if they had been expressly and in plain

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* Euseb. Demonst. Evan. lib. vi. Pro. 2m. Chryf. in Isai. c. vi. i. Theodor. in Ezech. Praef.

plain terms foretold, unless God would have forced men to the Accomplishment of his Predictions, which must have taken away the Liberty of Human Actions. For men would scarce have ventured upon such Actions, as they knew before-hand must end in Affliction and great Calamity, and perhaps in the ruin of themselves, or of their Families or Nation; and yet it may be necessary, that these things should come to pass, for the wise ends of Providence, and for the Good and Salvation of Mankind. Few would have shewn that Courage and Resolution, which St *Peter* and St *Paul* did in preaching the Gospel, if they had been told so long before, as St *Peter* was, that it must end in Martyrdom, or if the Holy Ghost had witnessed in every City concerning them, as he did of St *Paul*, saying in express terms, that *bonds and afflictions did abide him*; most other men would have been *moved*, tho he was not, by *any of these things*, Acts xx. 23. For we find that the Disciples upon this account were earnest with him not to go up to *Jerusalem*. So difficult is it for the best men in the best cause to resolve to meet certain and apparent Dangers. The nature therefore of some things requires, that they should not be more particularly described in the Prophecies concerning them. For either they must have been obscurely spoken of, or else they could not have been prophesied of at all: because if they

they had been clearly foretold, they could never have come to pass; which implies a contradiction: for it is impossible that what God declares by his Prophets should not be fulfilled. If all that was to befall the Church of Christ had been set down with the circumstances of time and place, and persons, by St *John* in the *Revelation*, so as to prevent the objections of those, who except against the obscurity of that Book, this certainly would have proved a great discouragement to many Christians in the performance of their Duty, and must have hindered the bringing to pass the events, unless God should have over-ruled the minds of men, and forced them upon acting, which had been to deprive them of their Freedom of Will.

4. If Prophecies had punctually foretold the things to be fulfilled in all their Circumstances, men would have purposely contrived to frame their actions in such a manner, as to appear to fulfill many of them, and whenever they had been fulfilled, it might have been supposed to have been by design and contrivance. Which would have been only to act a part, or live by a rule and pattern described and set before them; but when the obscurity is such, that they become fulfilled without any Intention or Knowledge of the Person employed in fulfilling them, this manifests the wisdom and providence of God. If Prophecies had been less obscure, men would have been the more prone, to venture upon the commission of sin in order to fulfil them. We find by experience, how apt all Enthusiasts,

and such as persuade themselves that they have a clear and perfect knowledge of the obscurest Prophecies, are, to think any thing lawful to be done, which may bring about those events, that they fancy to be the Accomplishment of them. And if the events of all Prophecies had been concealed under no obscurity of words and circumstances, but had been obvious and visible to every Reader, the number of such undertakers would have been much greater: for it is a hard matter to make men distinguish between the accomplishment of Prophecies, and the sin which is often committed in the accomplishment of them; but when they can serve their Interest by it, they are willing to believe the worst actions lawful, which may fulfil a Prophecy; and the clearer Prophecies had been, the more occasion and pretence had been given to such dilutions, to which none are now subject, but such as think them clear, and persuade themselves, or would persuade others, that they thoroughly understand them.

5. Another reason is, that sometimes a Prophecy may be delivered obscurely, in mercy to the Instruments, who are to bring about the event foretold by it. For God foreseeing that some men, notwithstanding the clearest Revelations, would persist in their wickedness, and become instrumental in accomplishing the prediction, may in mercy to them forbear to discover the particulars of the event, lest this should add to their guilt, and prove a great aggravation both of their crime and punishment.

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Our Saviour, tho' he knew from the beginning who it was that should betray him, yet concealed it, till his last Supper, and then discovered it to Judas in the mildest manner, to move him to Repentance, if he had not hardened himself against it; not to make him desperate upon the discovery of so wicked a design.

Again, other Prophecies may be hid in obscurity for a judgment upon those who are obstinate, and will not make a due use of the means afforded them of Salvation, but harden their hearts, and resolve to continue impenitent against all the methods which God has been pleased to use to reclaim them. For of such our Saviour gives this reason, why he spoke to them in Parables, *that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them,* Markiv. 12. For when God has both by Miracles and other Prophecies unquestionably clear and plain, admonish'd and forewarn'd 'em of the folly and danger of their ways, and they will take no notice of it, but reject his Revelations, and just affront his mercy, it is very for him to deny them that further Declaration and Manifestation of his Will and Power, which might effectually produce a true Faith in 'em, and bring 'em to Repentance, especially when the obscurity of Prophecies may be conducing to the methods of his Providence, and to his gracious designs of mercy towards other men, who have not stood out in so bold a defiance

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fiance of his other Declarations of himself. God endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardneth : and therefore the obscurity of Prophecies may be in mercy to some, to prevent the aggravation of their sins, and for a judgment upon others to harden them.

6. *It is the Glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of Kings is to search out a matter,* Prov. xxv. 2. The obscurity of Prophecies may be designed to abate the confidence, and confound the pride of some, and to provoke the diligence and industry of others. For as some men care to be at no pains to attain the most useful and necessary knowledge, so others despise all that is obvious, and have no satisfaction in the knowledge of such things, as are easily known by others as well as themselves. And this seems not only to have been the temper of those Ages, in which the Scriptures were written, when Learning consisted in Types and Parables, and in dark and intricate discourses, but it has been the study and delight of learned men in most Ages since, and of many men in all Ages to search into hidden and difficult truths. St. Jerom extols the *Revelation* of St. John for the obscurity and hidden sense of it. In that Age, it seems, it was no objection, but the highest character that could be given of the *Revelation*, to say that it was difficult to be understood. The wisdom of God therefore in condescension to all

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sorts of men, and to fit the Scriptures for the use and benefit of all capacities and dispositions, has caused some of the Prophecies to be plain and obvious to all Readers, and others to be delivered as to employ the pious and humble labours of the most Learned and Inquisitive, to keep them in perpetual dependance upon God for his Grace and Assistance in the explication of the Scriptures ; and at the same time to take down the vain curiosity and pride of such, as little concern themselves about the plain things of the Law, but are wholly busied in unfolding hidden things, and in pretending to *understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge*. The curse denounced against man upon his fall was, that with labour and sweat he should eat the fruits of the ground, as his punishment, for having eaten the forbidden Fruit : and it was but just with God to punish the curiosity of men after forbidden knowledge, which occasioned his fall, with making the attainment of knowledge more difficult.

If the Scriptures were all obscure, they would be of little use, if they were all obvious, they would be despised. For if obscurity be made an objection by some, their plainness and simplicity is objected by others ; but God has so ordered and proportioned the several parts of them, that no man may have just cause to complain, that he doth not understand enough for his Salvation ; nor any man cast them aside, or read them with little

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Care and Diligence, since there are so many things in them, which may require the utmost Study and Pains of the most judicious and Learned men.

7. There is no Prophet so obscure, but some Prophecies are very plainly delivered by him, which we know to have been fulfilled; and this is a Warrant and Assurance to us of his Mission, and that we ought to rely upon it, that whatever he has delivered concerning other things will as certainly come to pass; and in the mean time, before they come to pass, or are thoroughly understood, they are exceeding useful in the Church. The *Revelation* of St *John* is hard to be applied to particularevents, because it comprehends so vast a series of time, in which long course of years many events may be exactly alike at different times and in different places, and there may be a gradual and repeated Accomplishment of some of his Prophecies. But the time was at hand for the fulfilling of other of these Prophecies, *Rev. i. 3. xxii. 6, 7, 10, 12.* and we know they have been fulfilled in the seven Churches, *Rev. ii. 5, 16, 22, 23. iii. 3, 16.* which are proposed for examples to all others. *He that hath an ear, let him hear, what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, Rev. ii. 7.* The seven Churches are spoken to by Name, and what is said to them, having been fulfilled, is a certain argument that the rest, which concerns all other Churches, shall be fulfilled in its due time, tho it be not perhaps yet understood.

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But the obscurest Prophecies, even before their Accomplishment, are of perpetual and inestimable use to us. It is acknowledged by all, that Parables are very proper and fit for Instruction, and therefore in ancient times their Doctrines were wont to be delivered in that way; because it is a more familiar and easie method of teaching than by Rules, and Precepts, and Rational Discourse, without that Illustration which is given to them by supposing a particular case. For then every one is apt to make the case his own, when he sees the Precepts reduced to Example, and cloathed with Circumstances, and brought home, as it were, to his very senses, which before lay more out of sight, in abstract Notions and Speculative Discourse. And if feigned cases be so much more effectual than bare precepts or exhortations, an infallible account of the state of the Church in all Ages, tho we cannot point out the particular times and places, when and where every thing shall come to pass, must needs be of inestimable value and benefit.

To hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, to observe what errors and faults are reprov'd, and what vertues and graces are commended and encouraged in the seven Churches of *Asia*; the Praises and Adorations, ch. iv. and the Bliss of the Righteous, the joys of Heaven, and the rewards of Martyrs, ch. vii. the Terrors of the Great and Dreadful day, ch. vi. the great Apostacy that was to be upon the Earth, ch. xiii. the Patience and Faith of the Saints, and the Re-

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Resurrection of the Dead, ch.xx. the description of the new *Jerusalem*, and the glory and happiness of the City of God, ch. xxi,xxii. these are the subject of *St John's Revelation*, and are things of the greatest use and importance. We have the state and condition of the Church in all Ages presented to our view, tho' we are not able to mark out the particular times and seasons meant in the several parts of the Prophecy. And this is at least of the same use to us that all History is, and besides may be of as much more benefit, as it more nearly concerns us: for we do not know but that we may be fallen into the worst times there prophesied of. *Here is the patience, and the faith of the Saints.* We see the care and providence of God over his Church, the wonderful deliverances which he is pleased to work for it, the supports which he affords his faithful Servants under persecutions, and the rewards prepared for them, and the final destruction of the Enemies of God and Religion; these things are visible in the *Revelation*, and it cannot be denied, but these are of excellent use, to yield us comfort in the worst of troubles, and to excite Faith and Hope, and Patience, and all Christian Graces in the minds of men. The *Revelation* of *St John* may be look'd upon as an History of the Church without any Chronology annexed to it; but will any man say, that the exactest, and truest History, that can be penned, of the most important Affairs, and such as concern all Mankind, is of little value,

value or consequence to the Conduct and Management of our Lives, unless we were likewise acquainted with the particular time, and the Names of the Places and Persons described in it? It is as much as our Salvation is worth to be informed of a Future Judgment, tho' we are not told when it shall be; and that Book which sets Rewards and Punishments, Heaven and Hell before us, is of the greatest Advantage for the Edification and Salvation of Men, tho' the several Circumstances and Particularities described, are unknown to us.

8. Tho' the Arguments from Types are above all, apt to be look'd upon as uncertain, and to depend rather upon the Conjectures and Fancies of Men, than upon any clear Evidence: Yet we shall find the contrary, if we do but a little consider the Nature of them. A *Type* is a Likeness, a Form, or Mould, (as the word signifies) and where the *Antitype* represented by it, and prefigured, Answers exactly to it, there is no more question to be made, but that the one belongs to the other, than there is reason to doubt, when we see an Impression made upon Wax, what kind of Seal it was by which it was made; Or, when we see a good Picture of one we know, to enquire who sat for it. A *Type* is much of the same Nature in Actions or Things and Persons, as an Allegory is in Words: but Allegories are oftentimes so plain, that no man can well mistake what is meant by them. And thus it is as to Types in many Cases: Indeed

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where there is but one Type or one Resemblance, it is not so easily discern'd; but where many concur, he must be very wilful that does not acknowledge the Agreement. When an Author, as it often happens, describes the Persons of his own Time under feigned Names, a Reader who knows nothing of it, may perhaps over-look one or two Characters, supposing them to be by chance; but when he perceives that they all exactly agree to so many several Persons whom he knows, he no longer doubts of the Author's Design. And when many Types concur in the same Person, with a great number of Particularities, any two of which perhaps never concurr'd in any one Man before; as in the Person of our Saviour these things concurr'd, that he was compell'd to carry his Cross, as *Isaac* had carried the Wood; that he was lifted up, and fastned to it, as the Brazen Serpent had been lifted up in the Wilderness; that as the Bones of the Paschal Lamb were not broken, so not a Bone of him was broken when the Bones of these were, who were Crucified with him; and that he was Crucified at the very time when the Paschal Lamb was to be Sacrificed: when so many different Circumstances concur, which have no dependance one upon another, nor upon the Will of Him, in whom they concur, but proceed from the Will (and as in this Case) from the Malice of others; if these things meet by chance, it must be a very extraordinary and unaccountable

ble Chance indeed, and much such another as that was, which some would persuade us made the World; it must be such a Chance as never happened before, nor will ever happen again. But must not these Men rather speak and think by chance, who can argue at this Rate?

Sometimes the Characters are so lively, that the Types are as evident as express Words could have made them; as when in the Description of the Kingdom of Christ, he is stiled *David*, because, as he was prefigured by *David*, so he was to descend from him, *Jer. xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxiv. 23: xxxvii. 24, 25. Hos. iii. 5.* several Descriptions which were Metaphorical in reference to the Persons immediately concern'd in them, were literally fulfilled in our Saviour: Thus the Gall and Vinegar, the Casting of Lots upon the Garments, and the Piercing of the Hands and Feet are Metaphorical Expressions, of great Contempt and Cruelty used towards the Persons to whom they were at first applied; but in their ultimate End and Design, they were true to the very Letter. And where there is thus a Two-fold Signification of any place of Scripture, the one improper and Metaphorical, the other proper and Litteral; the Person described in Metaphorical Terms is as clearly a Type of him, from whose real Condition and Circumstances the Metaphor is taken, as a Metaphor is a Representation of the plain Sense contained under it.

The Legal Dispensation was all Typical, and so the *Jews* ever understood it to be; which made the Apostles dispute with them from the Types of their Law, as they surely would never have done, if it had not on all sides been agreed, that it was a proper way of Argument. Their Prophecies were given out in Actions as well as in Words; and as the Mind either of God or Man may be express as fully by Actions as by the plainest Words: so certainly we must acknowledge this to be the Case, when Types so evidently denote the Person, and so properly belong to him, as to declare and bespeak him to be the Man, in such a manner that we should conclude, that any Person of our own Times must needs be meant by any Author, who should thus describe him in a Book, the Design whereof was known to be, to make such Descriptions. It is not indeed every Resemblance which we may conclude from, but where many Types concur in the same Person, where the concurrence depends wholly upon the Will of his Adversaries, or not in the least upon his own Will; when these Types were alledged from a Dispensation, which was all along held to be Typical; in this case they may be urged, and as safely relyed upon as any other Argument.

III. In the last place, I am to shew that the obscurity of the Scriptures is not such as
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to be any prejudice to their Authority, nor to the End and Design of them. And the Reason of this is implied by *St. Peter*, when he says, that there are but *some things hard to be understood* in the Scriptures, and the rest are plain and obvious. All things necessary to Salvation are sufficiently clear in the Scripture; and tho' there be other things in them which are obscure, yet we see that Reasons may be given (and perhaps many more and better than I am able to produce) why they are and ought to be so. God supplies us in Necessaries with a bountiful and open Hand; and what is not necessary, he surely may discover more sparingly and more obscurely to us. It is so in the things of this Life: Our Senses seldom or never fail us in things necessary to our Life and Health, tho' in other things we find our selves misled by them; every Country and Place affords the Necessaries of Life; and that which is most rare is always least necessary; it may be useful, but yet we may very well be without it. Now to complain that all places of Scripture are not intelligible by all, is, as if we should blame Providence for not making all Men Rich, and all Countries like the Land of *Canaan*; it is a sign we are resolved to find fault, and never to be satisfied with what we have unless we be humoured in every thing. But we should do well first to consider, how we can expect this at God's Hands,

or how well we have deserved it of Him. *The Secret of the Lord is with them that Fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* Psal. xxv. 14. *For the froward is an Abomination to the Lord, but his Secret is with the Righteous.* Prov. iii. 32. There are Secrets and Mysteries in Religion which cannot be supposed to be known to any but those, who are thro'ly acquainted with the plainer Doctrines, both in the Study and the Practice of them; and therefore if no such Reasons as have been now offered, could be given for the obscurity of the Scriptures in some places, it would be unreasonable, however, for such Men as make this an Objection to urge it; they have no Right to object whatever others may have; because they have never used the Means to know whether the Scriptures are so obscure as they pretend or or not. But they will never be able to prove, that if things necessary both in Faith and Practice be clearly set down, there may not be other things deliverd which are *hard to be understood*, and which those may *wrest to their own Destruction*, who are *unlearned and unstable*; that is, who have neither Learning and Skill enough to judge of such Matters, nor yet Constancy and Stedfastness enough in the Faith, to adhere to what they do understand, and not to perplex themselves, and suffer themselves to be perverted by judging rashly of things above their Capacity.

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The unlearned and unstable only are said to wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction: And tho' it is not in the Power and Capacity of every Man to be Wise and Learned, yet it is in every ones Power not to be unstable, but constant and stedfast to what he understands, and never to depart from it for any By-ends or Respects. Let us learn what is easy to be known, and Practice what we know, before we complain that the Scriptures are obscure. Let us study and practise the Scriptures more, and this Objection will not appear so formidable. But the Truth is, those that most use it, neither study nor practise them. And yet after all their Pretences of Obscurity, they have a greater quarrel against the plain parts of Scripture, than against the obscure ones; they know many places of Scripture which are plainly against them, and this makes them set themselves against all the rest.

What has been here said in general, I hope may be in some Measure useful to those who desire to read the Scriptures for their Instruction and Edification; and in particular Difficulties Books must be consulted, or such Men as may be supposed to understand them. But as for all that are fond of Objections, and read the Scriptures only in search of them, it cannot be expected that Discourses of this Nature should signify much with them. *Teach us, O Lord, the way of thy Statutes, and we shall*

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shall keep it unto the End. Give us understanding and we shall keep thy Law: Yea we shall keep it with our whole Heart. Great is the Peace, that they have who love thy Law, and they are not offended at it. Psal. Cxix. 33, 34, 165.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Places of Scripture which seems to contradict each other.

(x) Multum enim refert, ut est in Epistola Adriani, quam recitat Callistratus L. Testium D. De Testibus, qui simpliciter visi sunt dicere, utrum unum eundemque meritatum sermo rem attulerint, an ad ea, quae interrogati sunt, ex tempore verisimilia responderint. Grot. in Adject. ad Dan. c. xiii. § 1.

I. **T**Hough the sacred Writers no where contradict themselves, or one another, yet they were not solicitous to prevent the being suspected to do so by injudicious and rash Men, as they would have been very cautious of giving any pretence for such a Suspicion, if they had written any thing but Truth. It could not be agreeable to the Sovereign Wisdom and Majesty of God to comply with the Humours and Fancies of Men; but rather, when he had by an infallible Guidance and Direction prevented the Pen-Men of the Holy Scriptures from writing any thing but Truth, to suffer them to write so, as that they might be liable to the Exceptions of the wilful and perverse. Because it is more (*) suitable to the simplicity of Truth, not to be over-nice and solici-

solicitous about every Punctilio and smaller Circumstance; but to speak fully and intelligibly, and then to leave it to Men, whether they will believe or not; especially in what is told them for their own Advantage, the Relators having no end or design to serve by it, but only to do them the greatest Good they can; and bringing all the evidence for their Conviction, that Miracles and Prophecies can afford, which are the only Means of God's revealing Himself to Mankind, and then suffering in Testimony of what they have delivered.

Thus our Saviour, when notwithstanding all his Mighty works, many would not believe in Him, but questioned His Authority, and reviled His Person, and blasphemed the Holy Spirit, by which they were wrought, was not concerned to work more Miracles, merely for the Satisfaction, or rather at the captious Demands of these Men, when they required him to do it. For if they would be convinced by any reasonable Means, he had given it them; if they would not, it would be to their own Prejudice, he was not solicitous what they thought of him. And thus it is likewise in the Government of the World; God has given Men sufficient Evidence of His Being and Providence; but if Men will disbelieve His Providence and deny His Being, he doth not vouchsafe by any immediate and particular Act of His Power to confute their Pretences.

Pretences. And if, because of some places that are difficult in the Scriptures, Men will reject the whole, rather than be at the pains to search out the true Meaning of these places, or than be so modest and humble, as to suppose that there may be ways of Reconciling those, which appear to them, contradictions, tho' they have not yet found them out, they must fall under the same Condemnation with those, who will deny the Being of God, if they cannot satisfy themselves how he made and governs the world; or with those that would believe none of our Saviour's Miracles, unless he would work them when, and where, and just in what manner they pleased. But the wisdom of God sees that nothing would satisfy these Men, and that they only tempt God, and design no real Satisfaction to themselves: and therefore he cannot be obliged to new model the World, and alter the Scriptures for their sakes, since there is enough in them for the Satisfaction of all that are sincere in their Enquiries after Truth.

II. The only way to judge rightly of the particular places of any Book, is to consider first the whole Design, and Contrivance, and Method, and Stile of it, not to criticize upon some difficult Parts of it, without any regard had to the rest. This is the Method used by all, who would criticize with Judgment upon any Author. And some Passages of Scripture are explained to our hands, to be a Key, as it were,

were, and a Direction to us in the Explication of others. Thus, whereas in one place it is said, that Jesus baptized, in another it is said, that he baptized not, and the former place is explained to be meant not of Baptism performed by Himself, but by his Disciples, who baptized in his Name. *Joh. iii. 22. iv. 1, 2.*

III. It is reasonable to observe whether the Objections be not such as do suppose Mistakes, which a Man, who could write such a Discourse, as they are imagined to be found in, could not run into. For if they be of this Nature, this very Consideration is enough to take off the force of the Objection against the Authority of any Book; and we must conclude that the Objections are capable of being answered, and that the Mistake lies not in the Book it self, but in the Readers, who without sufficient Skill or Attention, pass a rash Judgment upon it. For by all the Rules of Reasoning, an Objection may imply too much, as well as prove too little to be of any force: And the common Rules of Candor and Equity would prevent many Objections which are wont to be made against the Scriptures. For if we will but suppose the writers of the Scriptures to have been Men of any tolerable Sense, even without Inspiration, they could never have committed such mistakes as some would fasten upon them. We read *Exod. xxxiii. 11. And the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a Man speaketh unto his Friend:*

The Reasonableness and Certainty

Friend: yet *Vers. 20.* the Lord answers *Moses*, who had besought God to shew him his Glory. *Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live.* Would it not be impudent Trifling to pretend any Contradiction in these two Verses, when they are easily understood in a consistent Sense, and no Man of any Judgment can be supposed to write Contradictions, and lay them so near together? When it is said, *Act. ix. 7.* that the Men, who journeyed with *St. Paul*, heard a Voice, but saw no man: and *Act. xxii. 9.* that they heard not the Voice of him that spake to *St. Paul*: besides the Explications which are known and obvious to reconcile these Texts, those, who will not be at the Pains to consult Expositors, or to consider the Importance of the Words, may be pleased to observe, that *St. Luke* was a Man bred to Learning, and this History of the Acts of the Apostles, shews him to have been, at least, a prudent and wise Man; and therefore he could never have written so palpable a Contradiction, as the Objection must suppose, in so small a Compass, concerning one of the most remarkable Things in his whole History, relating to a Person, with whom he constantly travelled and convers'd. I appeal to any Man, whether, if he had met with two such Passages, which seem to contradict each other, in *Thucydides* or *Xenophon*, or, even in the very worst Historian, he would not be inclined rather to seek out for some way

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of the Christian Religion.

way of reconciling them, than to suspect that he could so soon forget what he had written so little a while before, in an Account of a Thing of that Nature. Of the same kind is that Difference, which is between the Genealogy of Christ in *St. Matthew*, and that in *St. Luke*. For there is no doubt but the Genealogies of the *Jews* were then, and long after, extant in the Publick Registers, (*) they could repeat them by heart with as much readiness as they could their own Names; and to insert a wrong Genealogy had been to give up all the Arguments that could be alledg'd for our Saviour's being the Christ: Nothing could be more destructive to their Cause, than for the Evangelists to produce a false Pedigree, when the True one might be so easily produced by any who had a mind to disprove them. The Merits of their Cause wholly depended upon the Proof of Christ's Descent from *Abraham* and *David*; and therefore whatever Difficulties there may now be thought to be in this Two-fold Genealogy; it was certainly acknowledged by those of that Age, and beyond all Dispute, or else it would never have been produced by the Evangelists, or had for ever ruined their Cause, if they had produced it.

Some Crimes are too great to charge upon Men of any Credit or Reputation; and some Errors are so notorious that no Man of common Prudence can be supposed to commit them: And therefore when we find an Au-

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(*) *Ab exordio Adam usque ad extremum Zorobabel, omnium generationes ita memoriter velociterque precurrunt, ut eos suam putes referre nomen Hieron. in Tit. iii. 9.*

thor rational and consistent in other parts of a Discourse; the ordinary Ingenuity and Candor of Mankind will hinder us from supposing him to commit gross and palpable mistakes, and it is great dissingenuity and folly to shew the less Respect to any Author, because he is at least believed to have written by Inspiration, or to deny him the Respect due to a Man, because God has enabled him to write Intalible Truth.

IV. If any Contradictions be framed or forced from the various Readings, the difficulties in Chronology, or whatever else of this Nature is to be found in the Disputes of Criticks; they prove no more against the Authority of the Scriptures, than they do against the Authority of all other Books in the World, unless it could be shewn that these Difficulties could not happen in a Book written by Divine Inspiration, but that it must be first written in such a manner as to afford no occasion for Disputes, and that it must be ever after so preserved by a constant Miracle, that it may be subject to none of the Accidents and Casualties, to which all other Books are liable. On the contrary it can never be proved that God might not permit Books written by Inspiration, to be obnoxious to any such Casualties as are not prejudicial to the End and Design of a Revelation. But if the *necessary* points of *Doctrine* be preserved entire, and the *Evidence of Matters*
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of *Fact* be sufficient to prove the Truth of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* in Confirmation of that *Doctrine*; all lesser Matters may be left to the same contingencies which befall all other Books in the World.

That the Evidence is very clear and full in Proof both of the *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, which demonstrate to us the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, has been already shewn, and if no more could be produced than has by me been brought to prove their Authority; yet unless this can be proved to be insufficient from some mistakes or defects in it, no such Objections can invalidate it. Because no Man can prove that God might not suffer a Book written by his own Appointment and Authority, to be encumbered thro' length of Time, and the frailty and negligence of Men, with insuperable Difficulties, if it be supposed still to retain the visible Marks and Characters of a Divine Original in all the *Evidence* necessary to prove it from *Matter of Fact*, and in the *Doctrines* delivered by it. For as long as these two things are secured, all the rest tho' it be of never so great Use and Excellency, yet cannot be necessary in order to the ends of a Divine Revelation. And therefore a Book of Divine Revelation might be permitted by God for the Sins, and by the Fault and Ignorance of Men, to become perplexed with abundance of divers Readings, and even with Contradictions in the Chronologi-
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cal and less material Points of it. For so long as it cannot be proved Defective as to the ends and purposes of a Divine Revelation, either for want of evidence to make it appear to be such, or thro' defect of the Matter and Doctrine contained in it; all other Difficulties will never prove it not to be of Divine Authority, because so long as there is no Defect, but what might be in any Book, tho' we suppose it to be of Divine Authority.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Creation of the World and the Preservation of it.

BY *Creation* in the Book of *Genesis*, is understood not only the Production of the World out of Nothing, but the Formation and Disposal of the several Parts of the Universe. But there has an Opinion of late years prevailed, very injurious to Religion, and repugnant to Reason and the Judgment of former Ages; That God only created Matter and gave it Motion, to be performed under certain Laws, by which all the *Phenomena* of Nature both in the Creation and Preservation of Things are brought about, without any

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farther immediate Divine Power or Concourse, than what is just necessary to continue this Matter and Motion in Being; that is, God created Matter, and put it into Motion, and then Matter and Motion do all the rest in a settled Course, and by established Laws, without any need of the Divine Aid or Direction. This Notion indeed can never be reconciled to the Scriptures, but then it is as little befriended by Reason and Natural Religion. In proof of which, I shall consider: I. The Creation of the World, II. The Preservation of it; and shall shew, that neither of them could be performed in this way.

I. As to the Creation, we may consider both the *Time* and the *Manner* of it. And by the Time of the Creation, we may understand either the Time, when the Creation of the World began, or the Time which was taken up in the Creation of it. But this latter sense will come under what is to be said of the Manner of the Creation.

1. The Time of the Creation of the World, as that signifies the Beginning of Time, or of the Worlds Duration, must be wholly Arbitrary, and absolutely at God's Sovereign Pleasure and Disposal. For there could be nothing in eternal Duration to fix the Creation of the World more to one Time than another, or to determin why it should begin sooner or later. And since it is impossible that the world should be eternal, it is evident, that the Time of the

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Creation, whenever it was, can be no good Objection, because, tho' the World had been created never so long before, there must necessarily have been as much a Pretence for such an Objection. For there must have been some Period of Time, when the World had existed no longer than it has done now: and no beginning of the World can be supposed so long ago, but still it might with the same Reason be ask'd, why it was not created sooner?

2. In considering the *Manner* of the Worlds Creation, I shall prove, (1.) That there is no Reason to suppose the World to have been at the first made by Mechanical Laws, tho' it were preserv'd according to such Laws. (2.) That there are sufficient Reasons to be given for its Creation in that Manner, which we find related in the Book of *Genesis*.

(1.) There is no Reason to suppose the World to have been at first made by Mechanical Laws, tho' it were preserved according to such Laws (whereas I shall afterwards prove, that it is not preserved according to them.) There is no Reason that the World should be first framed according to the Laws of Motion which are established for its Preservation and Government in its fixt and settled State. The Origin of the Universe was by the immediate hand of God, before the Appointment of the several Laws which afterwards were to take place; and we may as well en-
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deavour to reduce the working of Miracles to the standing Laws of Nature as the Creation of the World. For certainly of all Miracles the Creation of the World must be the greatest, not only as it signifies the Production of Matter and Motion out of Nothing, but as it was the putting things into such Order, as to make them capable of the Laws of Motion ordained for them. It is not yet agreed, nor is it ever like to be, what these Laws of Motion are, which the Philosophers so much talk of, and there being such a mutual Connexion and Combination of Bodies, and such a Dependance of every Body upon so many others in every Motion, it is impossible to know how any two Bodies would act upon each other, if they were separate from all Bodies besides, or were out of that State which they now are in. It is reasonable therefore to imagine, that the several Parts of the World must be ranged and settled before these Laws could take place; and to reduce the Creation of the World to the Laws of Motion which now prevail in it, is to suppose a Creation antecedent to that by which the World was made. This is as if an *Indian* should attempt to give an Account of the making of a Watch by the several Motions, which he sees performed in it after it is made, and should imagine that the Materials moving in such a manner, at last arrived to the exact frame of a Watch.

(2.) There are sufficient Reasons to be
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given for the Creation of the World in that manner, which we find related in the Book of *Genesis*. It is great Presumption in Men to be too curious and inquisitive about the Reasons of God's Actions: for whatever he delivers of himself, we ought entirely to believe both the Thing it self and the manner and Circumstances of it. *Where wast thou when I laid the Foundations of the Earth, declare, if thou hast Understanding. Job. xxxviii. 4.* But this must be said to the Glory of God, and to the Shame of all such as Censure and Cavil at his Word, that even by Men such Reasons may be given of his Actions, as all his Adversaries shall not be able to gain-say.

God hath ordered all things in Measure, and Number, and Weight, *Wisd. xi. 20.* And as to those who enquire, why the World was created in six days rather than in one day, or in an instant, or in a long compass of Years, as the Laws of Matter and Motion, they say, require: It might be sufficient to ask, why, if it was God's Will, the World might not be created in six Days, as well as in any other number of Days or space of Time? If the Creation had been in an Instant, or in a longer or shorter space of Time, the Question might with as much Reason have been put, why it was not created in six days? Shall Men presume to prescribe to God the Time and Manner of his Actions? Is not his own Pleasure a sufficient Reason of them? The Manner of the Creation

tion and of the Flood, which have of late been the Subject of so many Disputes, depends solely upon the Will and Pleasure of God, and therefore we can know only by Revelation, how they were effected, and it is in vain to pretend that they must have come to pass in this or that Manner, unless it could be prov'd, that God could not bring them to pass any other way than that, which the Inventor of some *Hypothesis* thinks fit to propose. Most Actions may be performed very different ways; and if, for instance, we had only a general account of the Passage of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt* into the Land of *Canaan*; that *Pharaoh* pursuing them, was drowned with his whole Army, that they travell'd in the Wilderness forty Years, and had a sufficient Provision of Food, and Cloathing, and Water for so great a Multitude, in so barren a place, and for so long a time: tho' never so many Conjectures should be made, how all this might be, and never so many Schemes were drawn of their Journeyings and Encampments; if it could be supposed possible, that one of all these might prove true, yet it would be utterly impossible to know which were it. But when we are only told, that God created the World in six days, and that such and such things were created on each of these Days, that he brought a Deluge of Waters upon the whole Earth for the Sins of Mankind; which continued for such a time upon the face of the Earth; some Men

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will needs assign the particular Means and Manner, by which both the Creation and the Flood must necessarily have been brought to pass, as if the wisdom and power of God, and the nature of things could admit of no other way, but what they can explain. We may esteem the Learning, and admire the Sagacity, and allow the good Intentions of these Authors; but when any one advanceth an *Hypothesis* in contradiction to all others, and proposes it, not as probable, but as the only true Explication of Scripture, and positively maintains, not only that things might be so, if God pleased, but that they were so, and could not be otherwise; this to me seems more unaccountable, than any thing I ever met with besides, in the very worst *Hypothesis*. We can know nothing of the way and manner how God has been pleased to do any thing but by his own Revelation. If each *Hypothesis* were possible, yet no man could be certain which were the right, or that any of them were so; because God might make use of some other Means than what Men can imagine. But when the several *Hypotheses* destroy one another, and every one pretends to set up his own in contradiction to all the rest, and none can maintain its Ground any longer than till another has been brought to confute it, it were strange, if Men should satisfy themselves with such Uncertainties, rather than with the plain word of God.

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According to any Mechanical *Hypothesis*, (tho' there were no *Vacuum*) so many Accidents must continually intervene in a Chaos of Matter confusedly rolling and knocking one part of it against another, that it seems next to an Impossibility, that it should ever settle into any Order: at least, if Matter had been left to its own workings and jumbings according to any Mechanical Laws of Motion, the world for ought any Man can prove, might not have been made to this Moment. So far is it from being possible to understand, how, upon Mechanical Principles, the world should have been made in six Years, rather than in six Days, consisting of four and twenty Hours. It is therefore the boldest Attempt that can be conceived for Men to pretend to assign the several steps and degrees in the process of this wonderful Operation, with as much ease and certainty, as if they had all the Materials by them in their Laboratory, and could perform it as readily as an ordinary course of Chymistry. Next to attempt the making of a world, what undertaking can be more daring than to pretend to discover how it was made? To make a World must undoubtedly be the work of God, and he alone can declare how he made it. But Reasons may be given for the Creation of the world in six Days; (1.) With Respect to Angels, (2.) With Respect to Men.

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(a) Aug. Super. Gen. ad Literan. lib. 4. c. 22. &c. De Civit. Dei lib. 21. c. 7.
 (b) Tho. Aquin. Sum. Part. 1. Qu. 58. Art. 6.

I. With Respect to the Angels. It is (a) St. *Austin's* Opinion, that the six Days of the Creation of the World in the Book of *Genesis*, are distinguished according to the Perception which the Angels had of the Creation; from whence was framed that Distinction of the (b) Schoolmen between *Cognitio Matutina*, and *Cognitio Vespertina*. And tho' what I am about to say, is not exactly agreeable to St. *Austin's* Notion, yet I hope his Authority will warrant my arguing from this Topick to such as may think it new and singular.

The Angels were the beginning of the Creation, and were created probably in the Morning of the first Day. For in the Book of *Job*, God says, that when the Foundations of the Earth were laid, *the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for Joy.* Job xxxviii. 7. from whence we learn that the Angels were created before this visible World, and glorified God for his creating it. Now the Angels, tho' blessed and glorious Spirits, yet are finite, and are unable to comprehend and fathom the wonderful works of God; there are things which *the Angels desire to look into*, 1 Pet. 1. 12. and the more they know of God and his Works, the more they adore and praise Him. The whole Scene of the Creation seems to have been laid open in Order before them, according to the several Degrees and the various Natures of things, whereby they must have had a fuller View and a clear-

clearer Understanding of the Divine Power and Wisdom, than they could have had, if the World had started forth in an Instant, and jump'd, as it were, into this beautiful Frame and Order. As he who sees the whole Method and Contrivance of any Curious piece of Art, values and admires the Artist more than one does, that beholds it in Gross. God was pleased therefore to display his Glory before the Angels, and by several steps and degrees, to excite their Praise, and Love, and Adoration, which moved them to *Songs and Shouts of Joy*, and by this means his Glory and their own Happiness was advanced, much beyond what it would have been, if all things had been created and disposed into their Rank and Order at one Moment. They look'd into the first Principles and Seeds of Things, and every day presented them with a glorious Spectacle of New Wonders; the first Seven Days of the World, they kept a continual Triumph or Jubile; and thus their Voices were tuned and raised, as I may say, to those Praises, which were to be their Employment and their Happiness to all Eternity; the more they saw, the more they knew, and the more they knew of the Works of God, the more they for ever loved and adored Him.

This affords us a Reason, why so much more time was spent in the forming of the Earth, and the Creatures belonging to it, than in the formation of the Heavenly Bodies. Be-
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cause the Heavens are of a Uniform and Similar Nature, and a vast *Vacuum* is now supposed to be in them, and therefore the Nature of them might, without any successive Production, be displayed at once to the Angels; but the Earth being of a Compound Nature and containing Creatures of very different kinds, it required more time to give a distinct perception of the several Parts and Species of it. And the Planets being of the like Nature with the Earth, since the Earth, the Seat of Man's Habitation was framed by such leisurely degrees, as might give a suitable Idea of it; the other Planets might be framed at once, there being nothing more in them than what was observeable in the Formation of the Earth, or they might be framed together with the Earth by the same Measures and Degrees.

But according to the Mechanical way the Angels would have only the Prospect of a vast Chaos, rolling and working for many thousands of years, perhaps before any thing considerable could have been framed out of it: And those tedious delays must yet according to this Notion have been carried on by such certain Methods, that there could have been little wonderful in it to an Angel, when the Mechanical Philosophers themselves think they can point out the several Steps and Motions, by which all was done.

The making of Man was the last and finish-

nishing Work of the Creation, when the World was prepared for the Reception of him, and he was made with much solemnity.

Let us make Man in our Image after our Likeness. Gen. i. 26. and the Man and the Woman were made apart. For Adam was Created with all the Perfections suitable for him, both as a Man, and as the first Man, out of whom Eve was to be formed: As Man he was to have all the Parts and Faculties which Men have now, but in greater Perfection; as the first Man, he was besides to have a Rib or (*) Part, out of which the Woman was to be made. Which being the principal, and, as it were, the seminal Matter, no mention is made of any other; but as Animals and Plants are properly said to come from the Seed, tho' they are not made of that only; so Eve was properly made of Adam's Rib, tho' other Matter besides might go to her Composition. This way of Formation was to betoken that Love and Duty which ought to be between Husband and Wife. And as the Creation and Happiness of Man provoked the Envy of Evil Angels, so no doubt it occasioned the Joy and Praise of the Good ones.

(2.) By this successive and Gradual Production and Disposition of things in six days at the Creation; the Glory of God is likewise more manifested to Men than it would have been, if all had been done at once, or by

(c) Dicunt etiam; U-nam ex co-stis ejus in-dem esse quod u-nam ex partibus ejus, vel u-nam partem ejus quam explicatio-nem confirmant ex eo quod in Targum vocabu-lum Tze-lab costa redditur per Setar ut Tzelab costa Tabernaculi redditur in Targum per Setar latus Tabernaculi; ita hic dicunt Mizab. ar idem esse quod Miz-trahi me. Ne

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slow and tedious Methods. This gives us a more clear and distinct comprehensive Notion of the Works of God than we could otherwise have had. It is acknowledged, that *Moses* has given such an Account of the Creation, as is more intelligible and better adapted to the Capacities of the generality of Men, than that which any one would now obtrude upon us as a true Account of it: But whatever Reasons can be assigned why the Creation should be described as it is in the Book of *Genesis*; the same Reasons will prove that it was fitting it should be so performed: If it be more suitable to the Capacities and Comprehensions of Men, that the Creation of the World should be delivered to us as finished in six days rather than in a less or a longer time; it was fit that it should have been really finished in this space of time, and should be indeed so performed as might make the History the more useful to us. For in respect of God it was alike to Create all things in an instant, or to do it successively in a shorter or a longer time; and in respect of Mankind no reason can be assigned why the History of the Creation should be delivered so as to represent it to Men as performed in this manner; but the same Reason will hold why it should have been in the same manner performed.

God Blessed the Seventh day and Sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his Work

Work which God Created and Made, Gen. ii. 3. and so, Exod. xx. 10, 11. the Observation of the Sabbath, or of one day in Seven to the Honour of God, is established upon the Worlds being Created in six days, and therefore, if it be reasonable to keep one day in Seven Holy in Remembrance of the Creation, it must be reasonable that the Creation of the World should have been performed in six days, since the Obligation to observe a Seventh day in remembrance of the Creation, implies that God rested on the Seventh day after he had Created the World in Six, or in the same space of time, which is contained in six days. God saw it fitting that a day should be set apart to Commemorate the Creation, and to Praise him for all his wonderful Works, and that this day should return at such a distance of time; and he observed such Order in the Creation, that every day between these Periods of time might bring some particular work of it to Remembrance, and every Seventh day might conclude in the Commemoration of the whole Creation.

Our Saviour answers the Pharisees, when they proposed the Question to him about Divorces, by putting them in Mind of the Order, which God used in the Creation, *Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them Male and Female? And said, for this cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his Wife: and they*
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twain shall be one Flesh? Matth. xix. 4.
 5. And St. Paul in like manner, to shew that the Woman ought not to usurp Authority over the Man, proves it by this Argument: *For Adam was first formed, then Eve.* 1 Tim. ii. 13. and in another place and upon another occasion he observes, that *the Man is not of the Woman, but the Woman of the Man.* 1 Cor. xi. 8. And long before the Prophet Malachi had Argued from the same Topick, *Malach. ii. 15.* And *Hebr. iv. 4.* it is noted, that *God did rest the Seventh day from all his Works,* from whence the Apostle concludes, that *he that is entred into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own Works, as God did from his,* Vers. 10. Now as these and whatever other Arguments are to be found in the Scriptures of the like Nature, do evidently suppose the Creation of the World in the same manner, as it is related in the Book of *Genesis*; so they explain to us the Reasons why it was thus Created. For all these Arguments had been lost, and there could have been no ground for them, if the World had been otherwise created. As certainly therefore, as this Arguing from the manner of the Creation is good: So certain it is, both that the World was so Created, and that there was great Reason for it.

But whatever some Philisophers may think now, there is nothing which would have been more disagreeable to the Notions of the Generality of the wisest Men in all Ages, than that

that the World should be made upon Mechanical Principles. *He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast,* Psal. xxxiii. 9. *He Commanded and they were Created.* Psal. Cxlviii. 5. This expresses not only the Truth of the History but the general sense of Mankind, who have ever had this Notion of God, that to command and to do is the same thing with him. And therefore the Objection till of late has run the other way, that God did rather Create the World, in an instant than in six days.. It was little suspected formerly that divers Years or many Ages were spent in the Creation. It was in the Description of the Creation of the World that *Longinus* observed the sublime Style of *Moses*, and if the Relation of it be admirable, the Creation itself in such a manner as is there related, must be much more admirable. For it is proper for it to be thus described, for no other Reason, but because it was proper for it in this manner to be done. But what would *Longinus* have said, if the Creation had been related to have been performed not by any command which had its immediate effect, but by the tedious Process of Mechanical Causes? What Grandeur, what evidence of the Divine Power and Majesty is there in this more than in any Chymical Operation, if the Mechanical *Hypothesis* were true?

It were strange Presumption to demand of Almighty God a Reason of all his Actions, and not to believe him upon his Word, that he has done any thing, but when and how
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some Men conceit it ought to have been done. But what I have now said may at least serve to silence the Cavils of such Men.

2. The Preservation of the World is not performed according to Mechanical Laws or Principles. The Mechanical *Hypothesis* supposes that Bodies act upon Bodies, or Actives upon Passives in a certain course, and according to such Laws as that, being left to themselves, they necessarily produce their Effects without any immediate Interposition of a Divine Power. But this Notion is grounded wholly upon mistakes.

1. It supposes that there was at first a certain quantity of Motion infused or impressed upon Matter which still continues passing from one Body to another according to certain Methods or Rules prescribed. But this Supposition that there is always the same Quantity of Motion in the World is wholly precarious, or rather notoriously false, and the best Philosophers have been able to give no Account how Motion can be Communicated without an immediate Impulse or Concourse of the Divine Power.

2. By the Mechanical *Hypothesis* it is supposed as a thing certain, that there is a *Ple-num*, which at least is very uncertain, or rather it has been demonstrated by Mr. *Newton*, that there is a *Vacuum* not only interspersed, but of a Prodigious and almost incredible extent at the distance of the Earths *Simi-*
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diameter from us. And by his Principles, Gravitation must proceed from an immediate and constant Impression or Impulse of God. For it proceeds from no Action of one Body upon another, but is a Quality belonging to all Matter alike, and to every particle of Matter, however separate and distant from all others. The *Projectile* Motion, and that *Attractive* Force, by which the Planets are carried in their Orbits cannot be communicated or performed according to any Mechanical Laws, whereby they are determined from a *Rectilinear* to an *Orbicular* Motion. For Bodies can act upon Bodies only by Contract, and therefore cannot Communicate their Motion, or any way determin; or affect the Motion of each other in a *Vacuum*, so vast as it must be near the Circumference of the several Orbits, so that the old *occult Qualities* and *Substantial Terms* were not more repugnant to the Mechanical *Hypothesis* than these Principles are. The being of a *Vacuum* must suppose an immediate Divine Power necessary to keep the System of the World in that order in which we see it continue. For otherwise by this Principle of Gravitations, being inherent in every Part of Matter, all Bodies would press towards the Center, and in a *Vacuum* there can be nothing to hinder their tendency towards it, till they come crowding one upon another; so that all the Order of things would soon be reduced to one confused

Heap or Moss, unless some immaterial Power interposed to hinder it.

It is evident then that the Mechanical Hypothesis is quite destroyed by these Principles. For by these here is no Connexion of Causes and Effects according to any Laws of mere Matter and Motion; but all must be done by the immediate Power of God, Gravitation and the Projectile Motion must be impressed and suspended without any dependance upon surrounding Bodies; they must produce their Effects thro' prodigious void Spaces, where Bodies have no Communication of Motion from one to another. And all being performed by the immediate directing and assisting Hand of God, a Man may as well pretend to solve a Miracle Mechanically, as to give any Account of the *Phænomena* of Nature by Mechanical Laws according to these Principles.

3. The Abettors of the Mechanical Hypothesis argue, that God acts in the most General and Uniform ways, that it is more becoming his Wisdom to let Nature have its course, and that constantly to interpose, would be a disparagement to the Order and Contrivance in his Establishment of the Laws of Motion; that Matter and Motion are with that Wisdom set to work, that they can perform all without any more than preserving and sustaining them in their Being and Operations; and that he is the best Artist, who can contrive

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an Engine that shall need the least meddling with, after it is made. But it ought to be considered, what the Nature of the Engine is, and what the ends and uses of it are, and if the Nature of it be such, that it cannot answer the ends for which it was framed without sometimes an assisting Hand, it would be no point of Wisdom in the Artificer, for the Credit of his Contrivance, to lose the most useful Ends design'd by it. As if among other uses this curious Engine were design'd to reward the Good and punish bad Men; to remove the punishment upon Amendment, and to renew it upon a Relapse: Since Brute Matter is incapable of varying its Motion, and suiting it self to the several States and Changes of Free Agents; he must assist it unless he will lose the Chief end for which it is to serve. It is no defect in the Skill and Wisdom of the Almighty, that Matter and Motion have not Free will as Men have: But it would be a great defect in his Wisdom, not to make them the Instruments of Rewards and Punishment, because it is impossible for them of themselves to apply and suit themselves to the several States and Conditions of Free Agents.

The Nature of Matter and Motion is such, that they cannot serve all the Designs of their Creator without his Interposition, and therefore he constantly doth interpose according to a certain Tenour which he has prescribed to

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him

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himself; but this Tenour and Course is altered upon some important Occasions. In a natural and ordinary way he Cures Diseases, sends Rain or dry Weather, or else our Prayers to him would be insignificant upon such Occasions, and there would be no room left for his inflicting these Temporal Rewards and Punishments. He feeds the Hungry that cry to him, and he punishes the Wicked when he sees it fitting, by Famine, or Drought, or Pestilence, in the ordinary Methods of his Providence. But sometimes he alters these ordinary Methods, and acts above them or contrary to them, to signalize his Mercy or his Judgments: And thus Christ fed so many thousands in the Wilderness, and God Rained down Fire from Heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by a particular and miraculous Dispensation. Miracles are the particular Appointment of God in peculiar Cases and Occasions, and the course of Nature is his general and perpetual Appointment at all other times. God at no time leaves Nature to itself, but ever concurs with it, by assisting its Power and directing its course, he ordinarily interposes in the constant course of Things according to established Laws: But Miracles are his wonderful Work, when he interposes in an extraordinary manner, and alters that Method which he has prescribed to himself to observe in the common course of Nature. God doth not in an extraordinary manner inter-

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terpose to prevent the irregular or unusual productions of Nature as in monstrous Births, &c. For how irregular soever these may seem, yet they are according to this standing Rule, that they shall be suffered to happen in certain Cases; and they rarely happening, serve to illustrate the Divine Wisdom in contriving Nature, so that in its general Course all its Operations should be regular and uniform; and from hence it appears that God doth not extraordinarily interpose to alter the Course of Nature, but for great Ends, Superiour to those which concern only the material World.

We may well suppose that God has as much regard to his Wisdom in his Government of the Moral, as of the Material Part of the Creation; and yet he has added supplemental Laws to enforce the Moral Laws, and these additional Laws have been changed, as the Circumstances and Condition of Men required. Why then should the Laws of the Material World be so much more sacred, as that he should never intermeddle with them? He assists Moral Agents with the continual supplies of his Grace, and natural Agents with that help which is needful for them to perform his will. God may hasten and assist natural causes upon our Prayers, he may quicken the Motions and enforce the Powers of Nature, and remove secret Impediments, to help and make way for natural Operations, or he may slacken or retard natural Causes.

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To say that God has so ordered the course of Nature as upon the fore-sight of Mens Prayers to him, to grant them what they Pray for, and upon the fore-sight that they will not Pray, to withhold from them what they want by Mechanical Laws, is by no means satisfactory. For there is neither Proof nor possibility of Proof of it, it is merely a Supposition without any ground of Reason, but only this, that the Mechanical Notion cannot otherwise be maintained. But I will suppose with much more Reason, that two Men are Sick of the same Disease, that the Circumstances of the Disease are all the same, and all outward Accidents likewise the same, till the Prayers of one of them make a Difference. For one of these Men upon his Prayers Recovers, the other neglecting to Pray, Dies. The natural Causes are supposed to be the same, excepting only so far as Prayer moves God in his Mercy to make a Difference in their Case. To say that this never happened, is wholly precarious, and hard to believe, since it probably may often happen in Epidemical Distempers; but it is much harder to believe that it can never happen; and if this either have or can happen, it is not upon fore-sight of their Prayers, by the contrivance of Mechanical Laws in their first Establishment, but by an immediate Act, that God assists Men upon their Prayers to him. The strange Providential Deliverances of some certain Persons are observable in every

Age

Age, and all Histories mention them. But how shall particular Men, amidst the greatest Dangers, be preserved in the common Calamities of the Sword, and Famine, and Pestilence, but by a particular interposing Providence? Were these Men who have been so remarkably preserv'd all of one Constitution; or do Soldiers Slay Mechanically, tho' the Plague and Famine should be supposed to do so? I wonder it should be thought less agreeable to Philosophy, for God to interpose in directing natural Causes than in over-ruling Moral Agents, where the Designs of the Providence equally require it. The same Providence delivers both *from the snare of the Hunter and from the noisome Pestilence. A thousand shall fall besides thee, and ten thousand at thy Right Hand, but it shall not come nigh thee, Psal. xci. 3. 7.*

4. The Mechanical Philosophy proceeds upon a wrong Notion of God, supposing it unworthy of him to be concerned immediately in every thing which is done. We may as well imagine it below him to know every thing, as to suppose it unworthy of him to concern himself in it: And yet he cannot but know every thing being Omniscient, and he cannot but concur in every Operation of natural Causes, being Omnipresent, and wherever he is, he Acts. It is the Perfection of the Eye to see all that is within View, how small and inconsiderable soever it be; nay, the smaller the Object discerned is, the more perfect it

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proves

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proves the fight to be: And if a Man could do every little thing at the same time that he does things of Importance, and with no trouble to himself, it would be surely more perfection in him than to do these only. But a Variety of business is troublesome to Men, and small Affairs hinder and call them off from those of moment. Tho' with God it is quite otherwise; he acts with the same Ease wherewith he sees or knows or exists; he knows all things with one Omniscient Thought, and he does all things by one omnipotent Act, nothing can be in the least difficult to him, and nothing can be done without him, *in Him we live and move and have our Being. Act. xvii. 28.* And what the Scripture delivers relating to the Creation and Preservation of the World, may in strictness of Philosophy be taken in a proper and literal Sense. But do Men indeed consider what it is to make and preserve a World, when they pretend to shew by what steps God proceeds in it, and to explain the whole Process, as it were, of the Operation? Is there not infinite Wisdom required to know what infinite Power only can effect?

And after all, it is very probable both from Scripture and from Reason, that the invisible and immaterial part of the Creation has a greater Share in the guidance and conduct of the visible and material part of it, than is commonly supposed. For since the wonder-
ful

ful improvement of experimental Philosophy, and the various *Hypotheses* which have been raised upon it; Men have been apt to look upon natural Philosophy not only as a distinct Science, but as wholly separate from the rest, as if there were no subordination and dependence between the visible and invisible World; whereas it is reasonable to believe that there is a continued Connexion and Chain of Causes in the Operations and Productions of things, and a constant influence and intercourse between the Superior and Inferior Created Beings. It is certain that God useth the Ministry of Angels in the Government of the World, but how far, and to what particular purposes, and upon what occasions, no Man is able to determine: However, those who have been the most curious inquirers into Nature, daily meet with so many new and strange Discoveries, that they have been forced to complain, that the contrivers of *Hypotheses* have been too hasty in framing them without a sufficient number of Experiments; from whence we may conclude, that if Men will first content themselves to make Experiments in order to give a true History of the *Phænomena* of Nature before they attempt to solve them upon their own Principles, the World will have an end before any compleat System can be contrived to give any tolerable Account of them.

I will conclude this Chapter in the Words
with

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with which M. *Huygens* concludes his Conjectures concerning the Planetary Worlds. For my part, says he, I shall be very well contented, and shall count I have done a great matter, if I can but come to any knowledge of the Nature of things as they now are, never troubling my Head about their Beginning, or how they were made, knowing That to be out of the reach of Humane Knowledge, or even Conjecture.

CHAP. X.

Of other Habitable Worlds besides this Earth.

Those who think that there must be other Worlds inhabited besides this Earth, where we dwell, or that else the Planets would be useless, and the Stars, which are like so many Suns, would shine to little purpose, do not consider, that

I. It is as easy for Omnipotence to make a Planet or Star, as it is to make the least thing in Nature.

II. The Glory of God Almighty in manifesting his Power and Wisdom, by making and preserving such vast Bodies in their several Orbs and Motions may be a sufficient Reason for

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for their Creation, tho' his Wisdom should see it fit not to have them inhabited. For tho' every thing be equally easy for God to perform, yet men are apt to admire the Works of this kind most. They employ the Wits of many Men in all Ages to consider their End and Nature, and to calculate their Distances and Motions, whose Curiosity might otherwise be very ill employed: there are some Genius's design'd, as it were, for these Studies, and they would want Matter to work upon without such Objects.

III. As the Satellites of *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and many of the fixt Stars were not discovered, till the Invention of Telescopes; so there are admirable Marks of Wisdom in many other Parts of Nature, which were never known till of late, and never could have been discovered, but by the help of Mycrosopes. But Men are not the only Creatures, which are capable of praising and magnifying God for his wonderful Works: Angels, who know them more perfectly, do it much more; and they have need of no Artificial Instruments to make Discoveries of the Divine Wisdom and Power.

IV. The Stars may be of great Benefit and Usefulness in the World, tho' they neither have that Influence which Astrologers vainly suppose, nor are as Suns to other Earths: For they serve to keep the circumjacent Air or Æther in Motion, which otherwise would con-

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geal or stagnate; and to maintain that perpetual Circulation or Fluid Matter, which passes from Orb to Orb, through the Universe, and gives Life to all Things.

V. Tho' this Earth be but small in comparison of the Ambient Heavens; yet the Inhabitants of it, from the Beginning of the World to this time have been exceeding numerous, and may be still vastly more numerous before the end of it. And we must consider the Earth, not as it is at one particular Time, but as it is the Seat of Mankind, and the Habitation of all Generations for all Successions of Ages. And under this Notion the Earth is no such contemptible Place, tho' it be very small in respect of the Heavens that surround it. Nor is it strange that the Material World, how capacious soever it be, should be made for Mankind, to whom the Angels are *Ministring Spirits*, and for whom the Son of God himself was pleased to die.

VI. There are few or none of the Planets, but what by reason of their too near or too remote Distance from the Sun, seem incapable of being inhabited. M. *Huygens* in his *Conjectures concerning the Planetary Worlds*, says, that this (*) Water of our Earth would in *Saturn* and *Jupiter* be frozen up immediately, and in *Venus* and *Mercury* it would be evaporated; and he concludes, that every Planet must have its *Waters* of such a Temper, as to be proportioned to its Heat; *Jupiter's* and *Saturn's*

Saturn's must be of such a Nature, as not to be liable to Frost, and *Venus's* and *Mercuries* of such, as not to be easily evaporated by the Sun. He says, (**) That the Heat of the Sun is nine times greater in *Mercury* than with us: (xx) Lib. in *Venus* it is twice as hot as with us, the Light and Heat in *Mars* is twice, and sometimes three-fold less than ours. If there were any Inhabitants in *Jupiter*, they would have but the five and twentieth Part of the Light and Heat, that we receive from the Sun, and those in *Saturn* but the hundredth Part. Upon which account he is very hard put to it to furnish out Inhabitants for the rest of the Planets: but as for the Moon, and the *Satellites's* moving about *Saturn* and *Jupiter*, he does as good as give up the Cause, by reason that they are neither Seas, nor Rivers; nor Clouds, nor Atmosphere or Vapours, nor any kind of *Water*. Besides, that the time of Light and Darkness in the Moon being equal to fifteen of our Days, if the Bodies of the Inhabitants were such as ours are, he observes, that those who had the Sun pretty high in their Horizon must be like to be burnt up in such long days, and those that liv'd under the Poles of the Moon, would be as much pinch'd with Cold; as our *Whale fishers* are about *Iceland* and *Nova Zembla* in the Summer-time: And the Summer and Winter in the Moons or *Satellites* of *Saturn* are fifteen Years long; and therefore they may well be concluded to be uninhabitable: But because it may be alledg'd, that

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that the same thing was believed of the Frigid and Torrid Zones, before Experience convinced Men of their Mistake; and that, however, there may be other Planets or Earths yet undiscovered, at convenient Distances from some of the fixt Stars: I observe, that tho' it should be granted, that some Planets be habitable, it doth not therefore follow, that they must be actually inhabited, or that ever they have been. For they might be design'd, if Mankind had continued in Innocency, as Places for Colonies to remove Men to, as the World should have encreas'd, either in Reward to those that had excell'd in Vertue and Piety; to entertain them with the Prospect of New and Better Worlds; and so by degrees, to advance them in proportion to their Deserts, to the Heighth of Bliss and Glory in Heaven; Or as a necessary Reception for Men (who would then have been immortal) after the Earth had been full of Inhabitants. And since the Fall and Mortality of Mankind, they may be either for Mansions of the Righteous, or Places of Punishment for the wicked, after the Resurrection, according as it shall please God, at the End of this World to new modify and transform them. And in the mean time, being placed at their respective Distances, they do by their several Motions contribute to keep the World at a Poise, and the several Parts of it at an *Æquilibrium* in their Gravitation upon each other, by Mr. *Newton's* Principles.

VII. It

VII. It has been suggested by (*) Learned Men, that the Planets may possibly be inhabited by Rational Creatures of a different Nature from Mankind: their Souls may be of an inferior or superior Order to ours, and their Bodies of a different Form and Composition, and there may be different Laws of Union and Communication between the Operations of their Souls and the Motions of their Bodies: For there is no necessity to believe, that there can be no sort of Rational Animals but Mankind.

But I offer most of what I have said on this Subject, only as Conjectures, which have at least so much Probability in them, as to silence the Objections brought against the Scriptures on these Accounts. For unless a Man can prove these or the like Conjectures false, which I am perswaded no man can ever do, he must forbear urging Objections, that will be insignificant, if these Conjectures, or such as these, should be true. It is hard to assign every particular End and Use of many other wonderful Things in Nature, but lately discovered by Microscopes, as of any thing observable in the Heavens, either by the naked Eye, or by Telescopes. And when the Scriptures mention those Uses of the Heavenly Bodies, which more immediately concern our Earth, this doth not deny or exclude any other Uses, for which they may be design'd.

CHAP.

(*) *Campanella Bp. Wilkins, Sc. Huygens, Sc.*

CHAP. XI.

That there is nothing in the Scriptures which contradicts the late Discoveries in Natural Philosophy.

I. IT has been well observed by divers Writers upon this Subject, that the Scriptures were written with no design of Teaching us Natural Philosophy, but to instruct us in the Knowledge of God and of our selves; to teach us our Duty, and shew us the way to live and die well: and therefore they might make use of Popular Expressions and Forms of Speech, neither affirming nor denying the Philosophical Truth of them, but intending them only in that Sense and Meaning, which was their sole Design in using them. All proverbial Sayings and Metaphorical Expressions by way of Illustration or Ornament, must be taken from received Notions; but they are not therefore asserted in the Philosophical Sense by him, who useth them any more than the Historical Truth of Parables and Similitudes is supposed to be asserted. And to have made use only of Philosophical Terms and Notions

Notions, and have rectified the Vulgar Conceptions of Men concerning all the *Phenomena*, which upon occasion are made mention of in the Scriptures, would have required a large System of Philosophy, which had made the Scriptures a Book unfit for Vulgar Capacities, and for the use of the greatest part of those for whom they are designed. This Theory of Nature would besides have seemed as strange and incredible to most Men, even as Miracles can do. For there is hardly any thing that Men unacquainted with Philosophy are more startled at than Philosophical Discoveries. How incredible doth the Motion of the Earth, and the rest of the Sun seem to all Men but Philosophers? Who are generally now agreed in it, whilst the Rising and Setting of the Sun are Expressions now as much in use with such as hold the Earth's Motion, as with others: And indeed they must speak so, if they will be understood, and excepting this one Instance, which is and ever will be in use according to the vulgar Conception in all Countries and Languages, notwithstanding any Philosophical Discoveries; I know nothing in the Scriptures, which is not consistent with the present Notions of Philosophy.

II. And yet that place of Scripture, which is most objected on this Occasion, is so express, as that no Advantage can be taken against it. *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,*

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and

and thou Moon, in the Valley of Ajalon. *Josha* x. 12. Stand thou still, or as we read in the Margin, Be thou *silent*; be still, do not interrupt our Victories, and take part with the Enemy by withdrawing thy Light, and favouring his escape. And again, *Vers. 13. The Sun stood still* (or was silent) and the Moon *staid*, where the Word applied to the Moon signifies properly to stay or stand still, but the Word used concerning the Sun is Metaphorical, as if it had been purposely so ordered, because the Moon moves, but the Sun only seems to do so: which is further confirmed by the following part of the same *Vers.*, where in the Citation from the Book of *Jasher*, the same Word is used of the Sun, which was before used of the Moon, signifying that the Sun properly stood still. For the Book of *Jasher* is cited in its own words; but when *Josha*, who wrote by Inspiration, set down the words of the Holy Spirit, he expresseth the thing so, that it cannot be from thence infer'd, that the Sun must be supposed to move, but rather the contrary; tho' immediately after, in a Citation from another Book, he inserts the Expression of an Author, who had followed the vulgar Opinion.

III. Gen. i. 6. *And God said, let there be a Firmament in the midst of the Waters.* The Word translated Firmament is in the Margin rendred *Expansion*, by which seems to be meant this Orb, in which the Earth is placed,
and

and by the Waters above the Firmament or Expansion, may be meant the Waters beyond the Circumference of our Orb, and belonging to the Planets; and by the Waters under the Firmament, may be understood the Waters belonging to the Earth, and contain'd within its Expansion. For at first all was one confused Heap of Waters, without any Distinction of Orbs; the Mass of Waters being extended throughout, before the several Orbs were appointed; but then the Waters belonging to each Orb were caused to subside towards their several Centers, till they being gathered together in their proper Channels and Receptacles, the dry Land appeared.

I confess I once thought this had been only an Explication of my own, but I have since found, that it is of equal Date with the Modern Philosophy, and that it has likewise been lately used by others. Indeed it seems to be so easy an Exposition, that I believe it would come into most Mens Minds, who would consider how this Text may be explain'd according to the new Philosophy. Others suppose the Firmament to signify the Region of the Air, and by the Waters above the Firmament, they understand the Vapours contained in the Clouds. *When he uttereth his Voice there is a Multitude of Waters in the Heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the Earth. Jer. x. 13.*

IV. The Sun and Moon are called Two.

great Lights, Gen. i. 16. But this doth not imply that either of them is greater than the fixt Stars, which are not spoken of till the latter end of the Verse, But the Sun is the great Light that rules the day; and the Moon the great Light that rules the Night, the Moon being in respect of the Light which she gives us, bigger than any fixt Star; for She gives us more Light than they do, in some sense, however, and with respect to us the Moon is the greater Light, tho' the Stars are the greater Luminous Bodies. Consider this Luminary as it concerns us; and it is in that conception greater than the biggest Star. Yet the Sun and the Moon are not said to be greater Lights than the fixt Stars, nor as great as they are: But are only called great Lights which they certainly are, tho' every Star should be bigger than either of them. The Stars are plainly spoken of by themselves, and apart from the Sun and Moon, without any comparison or relation to them. *And God made two great Lights, the greater Light to rule the Day, and the lesser Light to rule the Night: He made the Stars also:* That is, besides the two great Lights which are the Sun and Moon, He made the Stars, which are distinguished from these, and not reckoned with them, but are spoken of by way of Parenthesis. The Stars being of another Division of Celestial Bodies, and belonging to other Orbs, are mentioned here distinctly, and not with any comparison to the Sun and Moon:

But

But will any Man deny that the Sun and Moon are great Lights, because the Stars are great Lights too, and as big perhaps as the Sun, and bigger than the Moon? There are in *Europe* many great Cities, and there are great Cities likewise in other parts of the World: Doth therefore he that says there are great Cities in *Europe* to Rule the Neighbouring Countries and Cities in other parts of the World, also, say, That the Cities of *Europe* are greater than any Cities in the rest of the World? Or if any one should say God made four great Rivers to Water Paradise, and Rivers in other places also, would he thereby affirm, that the Rivers of Paradise were larger than all the Rivers in the World besides?

V. 1 *Sam.* ii. 8. We read of the Pillars of the Earth; but this is spoken Metaphorically, and by Pillars of the Earth may be meant the Power of the Princes of the World, mentioned but just before. In the like sense it is said, *Psal.* lxxv. 3. *The Earth and all the Inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the Pillars of it.* We find mention made of the Pillars of the Earth, *Job.* ix 6. which is to be understood of the Earth's unmoveable stability, (*) as *St. Jerom* observes, and so the other Texts may likewise be understood by the Pillars of the Heavens, *Job.* xxvi. 11. we are to understand that Power which supports and upholds them.

VI. *Job.* xxxvii. 18. The Sky is said to be strong,

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strong,

(x) Columnas
hoc loco
pro stabilitate terræ intelligamus, quam Deus super semet ipsam firmatissimam male fundavit. *St. Hieron.*
Job. ix. 6.

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strong, and as a Molten Looking-glass, that is, to be durable, and resembling a Molten Looking-glass. But however they be taken, these are the Words of *Elihu*: And *Job's* Friends sinned in what they charged him withal, and therefore he may be supposed to make so innocent a mistake, as to think the Heavens solid, or at least, he as well as the rest might speak the Language of those that did think so.

VII. *Job* speaks strictly according to Philosophy, when he saith, *that God hangeth the Earth upon Nothing, Job. xxvi. 7.* And we read, *Psal. xxiv. 2.* That the Lord hath founded the Earth upon the Seas, and established it upon the Floods, and, *Psal. Civ. 5.* that he hath laid the Foundations of the Earth, that it should not be removed for ever. All which is as exactly as any Philosopher can speak. For the Foundation of a pendulous Globe can be nothing but its Center, upon which all the parts lean and are supported thereby. And the Waters continually flowing thro' the Bowels and Concavities of the Earth from the depths of the Sea, by a constant Course and Circulation, constitute an Abyss of Waters in the lowermost parts of the Earth. So that with great Propriety of Speech, the Terraqueous Globe is said to hang upon nothing, and the Earth to be founded upon the Seas and Established upon the Floods; and, *Psal. Cxxxvi. 6.* to be stretched out above the Waters.

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These are the places of Scripture, which as far as I have observed, have been most accepted against in this particular; and yet there is nothing in them but what may be accounted for upon the Principles of Modern Philosophy.

CHAP. XII.

Of Man's being created capable of Sin and Damnation.

IT is sufficient to prove the Reasonableness of God's Proceedings with Mankind, if none are punished, but those that deserve Punishment, and none punished more than they deserve; and all are rewarded, who by a Faithful and Sincere, tho' but a very imperfect Obedience are become qualified for a Reward. God can do nothing but what is perfectly Just, and Infinitely Merciful, and we must be very unreasonable, if we cavil at his Proceedings, which are consistent not only with Justice and Equity, but with Mercy it self. For where neither his Justice nor his Mercy and Goodness interpose, we must surely acquiesce in the Divine Pleasure, unless we can think that God himself should be

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more

more confined in his Actions than Men are: For within the Limits of Justice and Mercy, it is certainly left at the Liberty of every Man in any Office or Authority, to do as he thinks fit. Yet as God is pleased in his dealings with Men, to appeal to their own Reason for the Equity of them; so there is nothing in all his Proceedings with us, but it may be made appear to be more reasonable, even according to the Notion that we have of things, than the contrary would have been.

It must be considered, that no Created Being can in its own Nature be incapable of Sin or Default, because it cannot be infinitely perfect; for it is inseparable from all Creatures to have but finite Perfections, and whatever has bounds set to its Perfections is in some respect imperfect, that is, it wants those Perfections which a Being of Infinite Perfections alone can have. So that imperfection is implied in the very Essence of Created Beings, and what is imperfect may make Default. All inanimate things may deviate from the Regular course of their Natures, as they would certainly do, if the Divine Wisdom and Power did not guide and maintain them in it. And every rational Being must naturally have a Liberty of Choice, that is, it must have a Will to chuse, as well as an Understanding to Reason: For we have no notion how there can be Reason without Choice. A Faculty of Understanding without a Will to deter-

determine it, if left to it self, must always think of the same Object, or proceed in a continued Series and Connexion of Thoughts, without any Aim or End, which would be a perpetual Labour in vain, and tedious Thoughtfulness to no purpose: But, if it should be sometimes determined by something External to new Objects; yet, what use of Reason could there be in Contemplations, which were merely obtruded and forced upon the Mind? And because Rational Creatures must have some prescribed Rule of their Actions, from which being free Agents, they may depart; they must in their own Nature be capable of Sin. God is Infinite Perfection, and therefore is a Rule to himself, and his Essence is incapable of any other Rule of his Actions; he only Acts according to his Essence, from which it is impossible for him to vary. But the most perfect Creatures must act by a Rule, which is not essential to them, but prescribed them by God, and is not so intrinsic to their Natures, but that they may decline from it, for a free Agent may follow or not follow the Rule appointed, or else it would not be free.

The Difficulty therefore is not, why Man was Created capable of Sinning; for he could not possibly by his Creation and in his Nature be incapable of it; this is peculiar to God, who is infinite Perfection; that all Sin should be a contradiction to His very Nature and Essence. But the Question which has been

started

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started by some Men, if they State it right, must be this, How it came to pass, that God did not sustain and preserve Men by an irresistible Power from falling into Sin, when Damnation was to be the consequence of it? In answer to which, it might suffice to say, that in the Creation God must be supposed to act by His divine Prerogative, and by His arbitrary Will and Power; *He giveth not account of any of his Matters.* Job xxxiii. 13. but it is enough for us to know, that he made Man happy, and capable of continuing happy, and that there could be no necessity, why he should force him to continue so. Tho' we want not in the mean time Reasons to prove, even to our weak and imperfect Understandings, that it was expedient that the Happiness or Misery of Man should depend upon his own Choice, rather than that he should be kept unavoidably from all sin, and be placed out of all possibility of Punishment and Misery.

I. Because the Glory of God is hereby more advanced, and all the Attributes of His Wisdom, and Justice, and Goodness are more displayed, than if Men had been inevitably restrain'd from sinning. II. Because this conduceth more to the Happiness of the Blessed, than a Necessity of not sinning could have done.

I. The Glory of God is more advanced, and the Attributes of his Wisdom and his Justice, and of his Goodness it self are more displayed

played by leaving Men to a Freedom of acting, than they could have been by imposing an inevitable Fate and Necessity of not sinning upon Mankind. Unless Man had been left capable of sinning against God, he could not have been in a Capacity of paying him a true and proper Obedience: for Obedience supposeth Choice, and Choice supposeth a Possibility of Disobedience. To obey God in proper speaking, is to chuse to do what God has commanded, to submit to his Will, and to resolve to do what we know to be pleasing to Him, upon that very Reason and Consideration, because we know it to be His pleasure; not because the Necessity of our own Nature, or some over-ruling Power forceth us upon it. The Obedience of Rational Creatures, supposing them from their first Creation out of all possibility of sinning, would be no other, than that of the irrational and inanimate Beings, and a Man then could be no more truly said to obey God in acting as God has appointed, than a Stone may be said to obey him in falling downward, or the Fire in ascending: These act according to God's appointment, and so would Man, if he acted upon necessity; but it is an Honour and Homage due to God from Rational Creatures, that they should determine themselves to do as he has commanded, and make a free Acknowledgment of his Bounty and Goodness, and pay a voluntary Submission to the Divine

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Authority, which is their *reasonable Services*.

The Wisdom of God is and will be, especially at the Day of Judgment, more conspicuous by the Government of a wicked World, than it would have been, if all men had been forcibly kept from doing wickedly. To restrain the Passions, and over-rule all the Vices of Men, and set bounds to them; to bring Good out of Evil, and by unexpected Ways and Methods to lead Men to Repentance, and to appoint and bring to pass the whole Dispensation of the Gospel, by which the Treasures and Mysteries of the Divine Wisdom are revealed, and such things are discovered, as even the Angels themselves *desire to look into.* 1 Pet. i. 12. this magnifies the Wisdom of God much more than the State of Men incapable of Sin could have done. There is much more Wisdom shewn in governing Free Agents, than in governing by Fate and Necessity, and more Wisdom in making the worst Actions as instrumental and serviceable to the purposes of Holiness and Goodness, as the best could have been, than in not suffering them to be, and more in Redeeming Man than in keeping him by Force in such a Condition, as to stand in no need of Redemption.

All the Divine Attributes are much more magnified by the Incarnation of the Son of God for the Redemption of Man, than they could have been, if he had never fall'n: The Love of God is manifested in a more wonderful

derful manner by sending His own Son to die for us; His Justice in requiring Satisfaction, and His Wisdom, and Truth, and Faithfulness in recovering Man from his miserable Condition, and perfecting the Design of his Creation, in despite of his Disobedience.

It is the Mercy of God to save them that are saved; but his Justice is executed only upon the wicked; and why should we think it reasonable, that God should debar himself the exercise of one of his Attributes rather than punish such Men, as thro' their own Obstinacy will perish? Justice is as much a Perfection of God as Mercy is; and tho' it may seem terrible to us, yet it is as reasonable in itself, that wicked Men should perish, as that the righteous should be saved: And God acts upon Principles of infinite Reason and Wisdom, without any mixture of Passion. Therefore I demand, Is it reasonable or not, that the wicked should suffer? And if it be, why should not God act according to his own Attributes, and the true Reasons of things, rather than by our weak and fond Passions? Since there is infinite Wisdom, and Justice, and Mercy in God's Proceedings, it cannot be conceived, why the Ruine which many Men will bring upon themselves, should either alter or hinder the Divine Counsels and Decrees.

II. A freedom of Choice conduceth more to the Happiness of the Blessed, than a Necessity of not sinning could have done. The

Happiness

Happiness of Heaven consists in the Love and Enjoyment of God; but Love is never so great, nor so sensible an Happiness, as when there has been some Tryal and Experience in the proof of it. And it must advance the Happiness both of Angels and Men in Heaven, that upon Choice and Tryal they have prefer'd God before all things, and upon that find themselves confirm'd and Established in the perpetual and unalterable Love and Enjoyment of him. This very Consideration, that they might once have fall'n from his Love, inspires them with the highest Ardors of Love, when they rejoyce in the infinite Rewards of so easy and short a Tryal: and the Reflection upon the Dangers escaped, heightens even the Joys of Heaven it self to them, and makes an Addition to every degree of Bliss. The Remembrance of their past Sins and Temptations, and the Sense of their own Unworthiness arising from that Remembrance, will continually excite in the blessed fresh Acts of Love and Adoration of God, who has raised them above all Sin and Temptation, and fixt them in an everlasting State of Bliss and Glory. The Tryal that the Righteous underwent here makes up some part of their Happiness in Heaven, and in what degree soever their Happiness can be supposed to be, yet it is in some measure encreas'd, and, as it were, endeared to them by reflecting upon their former State of Tryal, which they were subject to Temptation and Sin.

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The Love and Praises, and Adorations of the Father for sending his Son and accepting his Ransom of the Son, as our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost as our Guide and Conductor to Heaven, must suppose that we needed a Ransom and a Redeemer, and the Grace and Influence of the Holy Ghost; that is, we must have been capable of Sin and Misery, or else we had wanted these Motives to the Love of God, which the Dispensation of the Gospel affords, and which will make up the Happiness of Heaven to us. Creatures cannot comprehend the Divine Essence, but they know and love God, according as he manifests himself to them; and therefore that Dispensation, which doth most manifest the Love and Wisdom, and Goodness of God, doth most conduce to the Glory of God and the Happiness of Men. The Blessed shall see God *face to face*, they shall enjoy his Presence and partake of his Glory, and in this their Happiness will consist; but the Love of God is not only the necessary consequence of this Beafitick Vision, but it is antecedently necessary to qualify us for it, and the more any Soul is inflamed with the Divine Love, the fuller and more perfect Vision of God we must suppose it to enjoy. But Goodness is the Object of our Love, and not Goodness in the Idea so much, as Goodness extended to us: And as God's Goodness is more manifested in sending his Son to atone

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for our Sins, than it could have been by exempting us from all possibility of Sinning; so our Love to him must be more strongly excited, whereby the Soul is dilated, as it were, and made more receptive of the Communications of the Divine Essence in the Beatifick Vision. As Faith is *made perfect by Works* proceeding from Love in this Life, and without Charity is nothing worth; so in the other World, where Faith shall be swallowed up in Vision, Love must be that Power or Quality in the Soul, whereby we become capable of receiving the Divine Communications, and the more extensive and boundless this is, the more happy we shall be; and therefore, whatever is most conducing to advance the Love of God in us, is the best means of our Salvation and future Happiness.

The Motives which the Christian Religion affords us, to the Praise and Love of God, will accompany us for ever to augment and improve the Happiness, even of Heaven it self, where *Charity never fails*: and it is not conceivable how the Divine Love could have been so fully manifested, and set forth to us so gloriously, if Man had never fall'n, but by representing to him the Danger of his Fall, and the gracious Design of God towards him, supposing he had fall'n. To have escaped Hell, and to find our selves in the unchangeable Possession of Salvation by the free Mercy and Goodness of God; and by the Death of his

own Son, are Thoughts which must create a new Heaven, as it were, in Heaven it self; I mean, they will enlarge our Souls to the utmost Capacities of our Natures, and fill and actuate them with such Divine Ardors of Love, as if we had been kept necessarily from all Sin, seem impossible to have been raised in us. The Angels themselves *rejoyce over one Sinner that repenteth*, and that Joy must have been wanting to them, who are of so much higher and more excellent a Nature than we are of, if there had been no Possibility either of Sin, or of Repentance. And the wonderful Dispensation of the Gospel is an eternal Subject of Praise and Adoration, an eternal Fountain of Love, and Joy, and Happiness to all the Blessed Spirits in Heaven.

The more the Divine Attributes are displayed, the more Adorable the Majesty of God will appear, and will become the greater Object of our Praise and Veneration; those that are wise and good will be made the wiser and better by it, and the happier in the Contemplation of the Divine Perfections. Now a Governour in his Laws, and in the Method and Order of his Government, has regard chiefly to the Good and Obedience; and has little Concern for the rest. And we must consider God not only as the Father, but as the Governour of Mankind; and tho' an earthly Father perhaps would by all means possible preserve his Son from incurring Punishment, yet a good

Governour, when the Ends of his Government can be better obtain'd by leaving him to his Liberty, would not restrain him by any Force or Violence. Therefore if the Liberty of Choice in Men, and the Possibility of their Sin and Damnation be for the Glory of God, and for the Benefit of good Men, and be no Injury to the Bad; this is a sufficient Account, why man was not necessarily restrained from Sinning, tho' Damnation be the consequence of it.

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Fall of the Angels, and of our First Parents.

IN the Beginning God created every thing perfect in its kind, and endued the Angels and Man with all intellectual and Moral Perfections suitable to their respective Natures: but so as to leave them capable of sinning. For it pleased the infinite Wisdom of God (for the Reasons already alledg'd, and for many more, and greater Reasons perhaps than any man is able to imagine) to place them in a State of Tryal, and to put it to their own Choice, whether they would stand in their present Condition of Innocence and Happiness,

ness, in which they were created, or fall into Sin and Misery. We have little or no Account in the Scriptures of the Cause or Temptation, which occasioned the Fall of Angels, because it doth not concern us to be acquainted with it; and therefore it little becomes us to be inquisitive about it. Indeed it is very difficult to conceive, how Beings of so Great Knowledge and Purity, as the Fall'n Angels once were of, should fall into Sin: But it must be considered, that nothing is more unaccountable than the Motives and Causes of Action in Free Agents: when any Being is at Liberty to do as it will, no other Reason besides its own Will need be enquir'd for, of its Actings. What is liable to Sin, may sin, whatever the Motive be; and to enquire after the Motive, is to enquire what Motives may determine a Free Agent, that is, an Agent, which may determine it self upon any Ground or Motive.

But how perfect and excellent soever any Creature is, unless it be so confirmed and established in a State of Purity and Holiness, as to be secured from all possibility of Sinning, it may be supposed to admire it self, and dote upon its own Perfections and Excellencies, and by degrees, to neglect and not acknowledge God the Author of them, but to sin and rebel against Him. And it is most agreeable both to Scripture and Reason, that Pride was the cause of the Fall of Angels. For those

Excellencies which might secure them from any other Sin proved a Temptation to this, and the greater their Perfections were, the greater was the Temptation; as in a Man who is guilty of Spiritual and Pharisaical Pride, all that is good and commendable in him affords him only matter for his Sin. So that where there is a freedom of Will and a possibility of Sinning, the very Perfection of Nature in a Creature may be made an Occasion to sin; and that which excludes other sins may prove a Motive and Temptation to Pride, which therefore we have reason to conclude was the Sin of the Fall'n Angels.

As to the Fall of Man, however the Thing may be disputed, the Effects of it are visible in the strange Proveness of Humane Nature, to act against Reason and Conscience, that is, to act in plain contradiction to it self; and its own Principles. This is a State in which it cannot be supposed, that Mankind was at first created by the infinitely Good and Holy God. And the most plausible Opinion, and that which has most generally obtained among the *Heathens*, is, that the Souls of Men had a Being before they came into this World, and were sent into Human Bodies in Punishment for what they had done amiss in a precedent State. But this is mere suspicion and Conjecture without any possibility of Proof, and there is this plain Reason against it, that no man can be punished for his Amendment, who

who knows nothing of it. For it is inconsistent with the Nature and end of Punishment, that the Offender should not be made sensible of his Fault, especially when the Punishment is designed for his Amendment, as it is said to be in the present Case.

If it can be supposed, that Men may possibly retain no Remembrance of what they did in another State, yet if their Faults were not kept in Memory, they should be brought to their Remembrance, if this Life were designed as a State of Punishment in order to Amendment. But the State of this Life is so far from being thought a Punishment, that Men naturally are of nothing more fond, nor dread any thing more than to leave it. And tho' Men meet with great Afflictions here, yet those do not befall those only or chiefly, who by their Proneness to Evil in this Life, might be supposed to have been the greatest Offenders in a former State, and every Calamity has not the Nature of Punishment. The Sufferings and Miseries which we endure by reason of *Adam's* Transgression are not so properly Punishments as the Effects and Consequences of his sin: But Personal Faults such as are supposed to have been committed in a State of pre-existence require a proper Punishment, and if the Punishment be for Amendment, as it is supposed to be in this present State, both the Fault and the Punishment must be known, with the Cause and End of its being

inflicted, and the greatest Offenders must undergo the severest Punishment.

The Account which the Scripture gives us of the Fall of our First Parents may be considered either, 1. in the Manner, or 2. in the Consequences of it.

1. If we consider the *Manner* of the Fall of our First Parents. 1. *Eve* was beguiled by the Serpent, and *Adam* was enticed by Her to eat the Forbidden Fruit. 2. They both eating of it, thereby fell from their State of Happiness.

1. *Eve* was beguiled by the Serpent, and *Adam* was enticed by her. It is not to be supposed, but that the Devil would use all the Means that the subtilty of his Malice could invent, to procure the Ruine of Mankind, and that therefore he would not only make use of inward Suggestions, but of outward Allurements also by a visible shape and Appearance. And if he had assumed the shape of a Man or Woman; *Eve* knew that there was none of Human Kind but *Adam* and her self in the World, and therefore that Shape was least of all proper for him to make use of. But if he had assumed any other shape, or made use of any other Creature as his Instrument, the same, or the like Objections might lie against it, that can be supposed against his beguiling *Eve* by a Serpent.

The Serpent's subtilty made him the fitter Instrument for the Devil's Purpose, for all finite Agents can act no otherwise than as the matter

matter they have to work withal will permit, It is supposed by a ^(a) Person of great Learning, that *Eve* was tempted by a fiery flying Serpent, such as are still seen in some Parts of the World, of great brightness and Splendor, being stiled *Seraphims*: *Num.* xxi. 6, 8. *Isai.* xiv. 29. which is a Name that denotes likewise one of the highest Orders of Angels; and he concludes that this fiery Serpent appeared to *Eve* in such a Shining and Beautiful Lustre, as she had seen Angels appear in before, and that it was mistaken by her for an Angel. This Account has great probability in it; but if it should not be admitted, yet we may observe that ordinary Serpents were generally esteemed sacred by the Heathens, as it is evident from the *Cauduceus* of *Mercury*, and many other instances; the sight of them was accounted a ^(b) good Omen, and the ^(c) *Genij* were painted under the form of Serpents. It was ^(d) reported both of *Alexander* and *Scipio*, that they were begotten of *Jupiter* under the shape of a Serpent, and ^(e) *Aesculapius* is said to have assumed that form, when he was transported in the time of a great Plague from *Epidaurus* to *Rome*, ^(f) Serpents were had in the greatest Honour, and had Sacrifices made to them in the Worship of *Bacchus*, and a ^(g) Snake was portrayed round the *Tripes* of *Sibylla Erychrea*. The Story of ^(h) *Ophioneus* among the Heathens was taken from the Devils assuming

(a) A. Bp. Tenison of Idolatry. Chap. 14.

(b) Valer. Max. lib.

i. c. 6. Dio. lib.

xlvii. in

tio Vopisc. in Aureliano Jul. capit. in Max.

im in jun.

(c) Pers. Stat. 1.

Propert. lib. iv. E.

leg. 8. (d) Liv. lib. xxvi.

c. 19. (e) Valer. Max. lib.

i. c. 8. (f) Clem. Alex. Ad-

mitt. ad Gentes.

Max. Tyr. Dissert.

xxxviii. (g) Apud

Euseb. Constant.

Orat. c. 18. (h) Orig.

lib. 6. 5. Spenceri

not. ad loc.

(h) Testul.
Prescript.
37.(k) Iof.
Acoft. lib.

6. c. 5. 12.

13. Martin.

Hift. Sin.

lib. 1. c. 4.

(l) Admo-
nit. ad
Gent.

(m) Lib. 5.

the Form or Body of a Serpent in his tempt-
ing of *Eve*; and the Hereticks called ^(h) *O-*
phits worshiped a Serpent, and to name no
more instances, Serpents have commonly had
Religious Worship paid them both by Antient
and ^(k) Modern Heathens. And if the Devil has
been so generally Worshiped in the Form of
a Serpent since the Fall, it can seem no in-
credible thing that he should by a Serpent
deceive *Eve*. He seems to have prided him-
self in this manner of Worship, to insult and
trample upon fall'n Mankind, by causing him-
self to be adored under that very form, by
which he first wrought our Ruine; to which
purpose *Clemens Alexandrinus* ^(l) observes,
that in the Feasts of *Bacchus*, they were wont
to cry out *Εὐχὴ* meaning, as he supposes *Eve*;
^(m) *Lucretius* makes *Evan*, a Denomination of
Bacchus. However it can be no impossible
thing, that *Eve* should be deceived once by a
Creature, by which her Posterity has been de-
ceived, even to the Worship of it in so ma-
ny Ages and Countries since. The Speech of
a Serpent could be no frightful thing to
Eve, who knew not what Fear was before
her Fall, and if it be thought absurd (tho'
it was so soon after her own Creation) that
she should not know but that other Creatures
might have the use of Speech as well as Man:
Yet why might not she attribute his faculty
of Speech to the Vertue of that Fruit, which
he might be supposed to have tasted, and
from

from his own Experience to recommend to
her. So far is it from any Inconsistency or
Improbability, that *Eve* should be beguiled by
a Serpent; and when she was once deceived,
it will not be denyed but that *Adam* might be
enticed by her.

2. The Sin committed by our First Parents
was in eating the forbidden Fruit, and they
both eating of it, fell thereby from their Pri-
mitive State of Happiness. The time when
our First Parents sinned is uncertain, and there-
fore there is no ground for the Objection,
which some have framed by crowding a long
series of things into the Business of one day.
Many Circumstances are omitted in the Scri-
ptures concerning the State of our First Pa-
rents in Paradise, and relating to their Fall.
For no more is mentioned than was needful
to *Moses's* Design, which was to give a very
brief Account of the most remarkable things
that had past from the Creation to his
own Times. It appears that our First Parents
were no strangers to the Presence and Voice
of God, and there is no reason to doubt
but that they were fully instructed in the
Terms proposed to them, with the Reasona-
bleness of God's Commandments, how much
depended upon their Obedience, what danger
they were in, and how easily they might es-
cape it, and become enstated in Everlasting In-
nocence and Happiness.

God had determined to make Tryal of them
by

by purposing an easy instance of their Obedience, and by forbidding them the use of but one Tree in Paradise: It was but a small restraint, and they had Ability enough to have overcome the greatest Temptation, and Life, and Death were set before them, as the Reward or Punishment of their Obedience or Disobedience, upon eating the forbidden Fruit, they must *surely die*; but if they had but refrained from it, another Tree was provided, the eating of which should as certainly have made them Immortal, as this made them subject to Death: For then without ever undergoing Death, they should have been translated to a State of more perfect Bliss and Happiness.

It cannot be deny'd, but that it was very fitting and reasonable, that God should lay some Restraint upon our First parents, whereby he might be obeyed, and his Sovereignty acknowledg'd: And as no Law could be more easily observ'd than this, so it was most proper for the place in which they were, and for their manner of Life and State of Innocence. The common Rules and Laws of Morality could then scarce have any place, but it was requisite that this or some such other Instance of Obedience, should be imposed. Theft, and Murder, and Adultery, and other Sins against Moral Duties were then either impossible to be committed, or so unnatural, that it can hardly be imagined, how any of
them

them should be committed, when there were yet but two Persons in the World, in a State of perfect Innocence: and therefore in Moral Duties there could be no Tryal of the Obedience of our First parents; besides, these were so well known to them, that there could be no need of any Command concerning them. But God gives them a Command in a Thing of an indifferent Nature, that so he might have a plainer proof of their Obedience, in a thing which was both indifferent of it self, and so easy to them, that nothing but a careless and perverse Neglect could betray them into Disobedience. To suppose Good and Evil to be in the Nature of Things only, and not in the Commandments and Prohibitions of God, is in effect, a renouncing of God's Authority; but this Tree was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: For it made them sensible of the Divine Authority upon which Moral Good and Evil formally depend, tho' materially they be in the Nature of Things: Whatever God is pleased to command or forbid, however indifferent it be in it self, is for that very Reason, so far as it is commanded or forbidden by him, as truly Good or Evil, as if it were absolutely and morally so, being enacted by the same Divine Authority, whereby all Moral Precepts become obligatory as Laws to us; For all Moral Truths, or Precepts, or Rules of Life, however certain and necessary in themselves,
yet

yet receive the Obligation of Laws from the Divine Authority, this being the most certain Truth in Morality, and in order of Nature antecedent to all others, that God is to be obeyed in all that he commands or forbids. But the Divine Authority was solely and purely concern'd in this Commandment, which had no foundation in the Nature of Things, but depended meerly upon the Will and Pleasure of God, and by the Transgression of this Law, it became notorious to our First parents and their unhappy Posterity, that both Good and Evil, whatever they may be in Speculation and abstracted Notions, yet as they concern us in the Practice of our Lives, are to be resolv'd ultimately into the Divine Authority; God is our Lawgiver, and nothing can be a Law to us but by His enacting, and what he enacts must be a Law to us; and of the same necessary indispensible Obligation, so far as he is pleas'd to enjoyn it, whether it be a Moral Precept, or only an indifferent Thing in its own Nature. It seems then that God was pleas'd to manifest his Sovereign Authority in this Commandment, and to shew that it is absolute and independant upon Moral Good or Evil; and that tho' his infinite Holiness and Goodness would not permit him to Command any thing contrary to Moral Duties, nor suffer him not to command Moral Good, and forbid Moral Evil; yet his Authority is arbitrary over us, extending as far beyond all the Duties of

of Morality as he pleases, which indeed are only Truths and Precepts, but not Duties to us but by Vertue of his Authority. This Commandment therefore was given in Assertion of God's Authority, whom it is always and in every thing good to obey, and evil to disobey, as our First parents found by sad Experience. (n) *Maimonides* observes, that they had the Knowledge of Truth and Falshood before, but Good and Evil became known to them by their Fall, whereby they understood the Value of that Good which they had lost, and were made sensible of the Misery of that Condition, into which they had brought themselves: They perceived how good it was to obey God, and how evil to be disobedient to Him in any thing whatsoever.

(o) Mr. *Mede* has observed that their Sin was Sacrilege. God had reserved that Tree as holy to himself in Token of his Dominion and Sovereignty, and appointed it to such uses as he had designed it for: and therefore it was a Sacrilegious Prophanation to eat of it; it was a Theft or Robbery, no less than the *Robbing of God*, as the Prophet styles Sacrilege, and an Invasion of his Right. *And the Lord God said, Behold the Man is become as one of us to know Good and Evil.* Gen. iii. 22. which words are generally supposed to have been spoken by a severe *Sarcasm*, or with an upbraiding Anger and Indignation; but they seem to admit of an easier Sense, if they be thus interpreted:

(n) *Maim.*
More Ne-
vocb Part
1. c. 2.

(o) *Lib. de*
Dij. xxvii.

The man is become as one of us, he has made himself as one of us; he has assumed to himself an equality with us. Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Phil. ii. 6. to be equal is there to claim an Equality; and so to become as one of us, is to challenge or pretend to become as one of us, according to the Devil's Suggestion. Christ knew it to be no Injury or Presumption in Himself, who was in the form of God, and was God as well as Man, to assume to Himself an Equality with the Father: But our First Parents, who were made in the Image of God and after his Likeness, were not contented with this, but affected something higher than the Perfections of a Creature, and aim'd at an independant State of Wisdom and Immortality, being seduced by the Serpent, who said unto the Woman, Ye shall not surely die, ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil. Gen. iii. 4, 5. This was a most heinous Crime to believe the Serpent rather than God Himself, and to be seduced by him, and hope by his Advice to procure to themselves Divine Wisdom and Immortal Happiness.

II. The Consequences of the Fall of our First Parents were answerable to their Crime, and were either upon themselves, or upon their Posterity, or upon the Serpent and other Creatures.

I. The Curse upon the Serpent was by a visible Object and Representation, to denote that Curse and Punishment which was denounced

nounced against the Tempter himself, who assumed the Body of a Serpent. The Serpent before had a freer and stronger Motion, and could lift up himself and reach the Fruits of the Trees, but is since confined to the Ground, and is forced to seek his Food in the Dust. And there being Relations of Serpents, which carry Part of their Body erect, this before the Curse might belong to the whole Kind of them in another manner, than it doth since to any one Sort. The Basilisk is said to go with his Head and Breast erect, and a Serpent call'd (p) in Ceylon, the *Noya*, will stand with half his Body upright for two or three hours together. (q) These may be for Monuments of the Truth of the Curse upon the rest; as some of the Race of the Giants were left in the Land of *Canaan*, till *David's* time, as a Memorial to the *Israelites* of the Miraculous Power of God in the Conquest of the Land by their Forefathers.

The Curse of the Ground was for a Punishment to *Adam* and his Posterity, and can be considered no otherwise, nor be made matter of Objection, unless it be thought unreasonable to inflict a Curse upon Mankind for this Offence of eating the Forbidden Fruit; by making the Earth less fruitful and pleasant to them. Tho' the Garden of *Eden* were the most delightful and happy Part of the Earth, yet the whole Earth before the Fall was very different from what it has been since. For if it had

(p) Kne-
xe's Hist. of
Ceyl. Part
I. c. 7.
(q) See
Mr. Medic
lib. I. Dis.
xii.

had continued as it was, the Curse and Punishment upon Mankind could not have been effected in that manner, in which it was determined.

2. Our First Parents were turned out of Paradise, and not suffered to taste of the Tree of Life. They had been charged not to eat of the Fruit in the midst of the Garden, and Threatned with Death, that is, that they should become Mortal, and be sure to die, if they would presume to eat of it. To be subject to Misery both in Body and Mind, so that the Body should decay, and at last be dissolved, and the Soul which could not Perish should be miserable after its separation from the Body, was the Original Notion of Death; and our First Parents, who had never seen what Natural dying was, understood Death no otherwise than as a Privation of Happiness, and consequently a State of Misery both in this Life and the next: The first was unavoidable, the latter to be avoided by Repentance, and a future Obedience thro' Faith in God's Mercy for Christ's sake.

They were hindered from tasting of that Tree which was to have been the Means and Instrument of Immortality to them. For God who has given a Medicinal Vertue and a Power of Nourishment to other Fruits and Herbs, might convey a Power and Influence into this Tree, of rendring Men Immortal by preventing the decays of Nature, and Nourishing or Strengthen.

thning them to an endless Life. How this should have been, we are now no more able to know than to become immortal here upon Earth: But this was God's Decree, that Immortality should be annexed to the tasting of that Tree, and therefore our First Parents, when they had incurred the Penalty of Death, were not suffered to taste of it, but were forced out of Paradise, and it was just that they should be hindered from enjoying any longer the Delights of Paradise, for the Transgression of a Commandment, which wantonness only and a vain and criminal Curiosity, could make them disobey.

We are able to give little more Account, how the Food we now eat, can nourish and sustain us from time to time for Threescore and Ten, or Fourscore Years, than how the Fruit of the Tree of Life should have been a preservative to keep Men alive for ever; only this we have the Experience of, and so fancy we can tell how it comes to pass; but that is strange to us; and what is strange, Men wonder at, and will hardly believe it. But since God has endued our ordinary Food with a power of Nourishment, no man can reasonably doubt but that he might endue this Fruit with such a Vertue, that it should have made men immortal to Taste of it, and have prevented that decay of Nature, which now still creeps upon us in the use of other Food. We may well suppose, that if they had once tasted of this Fruit,

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they should have suffered no Decay, but have lived in constant Vigour here, tho' partaking afterwards only of other Nourishment, till they had been translated to Heaven. Or it might be design'd not as a Physical, but a Sacramental Cause of Immortality, that is, as a Sign and Pledge of Immortality, God having decreed that upon the Tasting of this Fruit, *Adam* and his Posterity should have been immortal. But the Forbidden Fruit being of a most delicious Taste, as well as pleasant to the Eyes, and containing a very fermenting Juice, might put the Blood and Spirits into great Disorder, and thereby divest the Soul of that Power and Dominion which it had before over the Body, and by a closer and more intimate Union with Matter, might reduce it to that miserable Condition, which has been propagated and derived down to Posterity with the Humane Nature from our First Parents; as some Poysons now strangely affect the Nerves and Spirits, without causing immediate Death, but make such Alterations in the Body, as are never to be cured. And it could not be fitting that Man should become immortal in this Condition, or that the Threatning of God, however, should not take place.

From what has been hitherto said upon this Subject, I hope it is evident, that there can be no necessity of running to Allegorical Interpretations to explain the Fall of our First Parents. And indeed all the Reason that can
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be given, why it is represented under an Allegory, will rather prove the Litteral Sense. For if the Simplicity, and the Customs, and Manner of Life in the Beginning of the World did require, that the Fall of our First parents should be describ'd under an Allegory of this Nature; for the very same Reasons we may suppose that the Fall was in this manner. For what is it which makes it seem improbable, but only its being disagreeable, as some Men conceit; to Reason? But if it be absurd to suppose that such a thing should have been in the Beginning of the World, why is it not as absurd that such a thing should be represented to those, who liv'd at the beginning of the World, as if it had been? If this was then the most fitting and proper Representation of the Fall, why was it not the most likely manner for it to happen by? God's Dispensations are always fitted to the Capacities and Circumstances of those, who are most concern'd in them, and the Devil in his Temptations applies himself to the Circumstances of those, whom he would seduce: And it cannot be conceiv'd, that the most remarkable Thing that ever has befallen Mankind (except the Redemption of the World by Christ) should so come to pass, as not to be told to Posterity, but in an Allegory. For if the Litteral Truth had ever been known, it was impossible it should be forgotten in so few Generations, and that *Moses* should put an Allegory in the room of it. Did the Children of *Israel* know the Historical Truth of the Fall,

or did they not know it? If they did, why should *Moses* disguise it under an Allegory, rather than the rest of the Book of *Genesis*? If they did not know it, how could it be forgotten in so few Generations of Men, supposing it had ever been known to *Adam's* Posterity? If it were never known, but the Relation of it were always conveyed down in *Metaphor* and *Allegory*, then this *Allegory* must pass for Historical Truth in those Ages; and the Reason why it was delivered to them in *Allegory*, must be, because that manner of delivering it, was most suitable to that Age, and most credible, and every way most proper; and if it were most fitting that it should be thought to have happened so, this is a good Argument that it did really happen so, since there is nothing hinders, but it might so have happened, and it was most probable at least to the first Ages of the World, that it did so come to pass, or else it would not have been requisite to relate it in this manner.

3. The Fall of our First Parents brought a Curse upon their Posterity. And here it must be acknowledg'd, that God may bestow his infinite Grace and Mercies upon what Terms he pleaseth, and therefore he might ordain, that the Happiness or Unhappiness of their Posterity should depend upon the Obedience or Disobedience of our First Parents.

(1.) God might ordain that the Condition of their Posterity in this World should depend upon

upon it, so that they should have been immortal upon their Obedience, and should become mortal upon their Disobedience; that they should be made subject to Cares and Labours, to Diseases and Dangers by reason of the Fall of our First Parents, from which, otherwise they should have been exempt. This is esteem'd just in all Governments amongst Men, that Children should be reduced to Poverty and Disgrace by the Fault of their Parents, from whom Riches and Honour were to have descended upon them: And this way of Proceeding is just, both in Humane Laws and in the Dispensations of Providence; because God and our Country have an antecedent Right and Interest in us, superior to any Man's private Title or Welfare; and this they may justly make use of to restrain Men from those Crimes, out of Love and Concern for their Posterity, from which no consideration of themselves could have withheld them. The Experience of the World has found this to be the most effectual Remedy with many Men, and therefore the wisest and justest Governments have made use of it, and the most wise and just God might think fit to deal in this manner with our First Parents, by representing to them, that the Happiness or Misery of their Posterity depended upon their Good or ill Behaviour in this one Instance of their Duty. We daily see that Children commonly inherit the Diseases of their Parents, and an

extravagant and vicious Father leaves his Son Heir to nothing but the Name and Shadow perhaps of a Great Family, with an infirm and sickly Constitution, and little or nothing to support and relieve it. Now if these Miseries and Calamities had been entail'd upon all the Race of Mankind from *Adam*, the thing would have been the same in the Nature and Justice of it (for Numbers cannot alter the Nature of Things) as it is now, when they descend upon some, only from their immediate Parents. And therefore it must be much rather just, that the Fall of our First Parents should make their whole Race only *liable* to such Calamities, but not involve All necessarily in them.

(2.) The Communications of God's Grace, and the Favours and Blessings of his more immediate Presence, might depend upon the Behaviour of the First Parents of Mankind. He might send them out of Paradise, and might withdraw his free and usual Communications of himself from them and their Posterity, upon this Forfeiture, by their Disobedience.

3. The Proneness which we cannot but observe in our selves to Sin might proceed from hence. We daily see and feel the corruption of our Nature, by whatsoever means we became subject to it. So that it is in vain to object, that it would be unjust that all Mankind should be involv'd in *Adam's* Sin. For the Condition which we are in, is matter of Fact,
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of which no man doth or can doubt: The Question is only, how we come into this Condition; and since we are born in it; and it is our Natural and Hereditary evil, the Justice and Goodness of God is cleared and vindicated, by assigning a Cause for it; from the Imputations of such as must acknowledge the same corruption of Nature, but will allow no Cause or Reason for it, except the arbitrary Will and Pleasure of the Creator. The Children of vicious Parents are generally most inclin'd to Vice, and if Men may partake of the evil Dispositions and Inclinations of their more immediate Parents, why might not the Corruption of the Humane Nature in our First Parents descend upon all their Posterity?

(4.) The Happiness of Men in the next Life might depend upon the Obedience of our First Parents. For when God proposed to bestow upon Men Rewards of Glory and Happiness, which far surpass any Pretences of Desert or Claim of Right, that they in a State of Righteousness and Innocency could have been able to make, since the Promises were so great and the Happiness so far exceeding any thing to which Men could pretend a Right; we must be very unreasonable, unless we will confess that God might bestow his own Gifts upon his own Terms: He might therefore debar Men from Heaven upon the Transgression of our First Parents, because the Promise of Heaven was an act

of his free Bounty. For no Man can pretend that an Innocent Creature which preserves its Integrity, must, for that Reason, be advanced to the unspeakable Joys of Heaven. No Creature can be *profitable* to his Maker, and an *unprofitable Servant* can merit no such Reward. And what God was not obliged to bestow, tho' Men continued in the State of Innocency, he might with all the Justice and Reason in the World refuse, when Men became divested of their Innocency, and thereby forfeited all pretences to that Happiness which was promised upon condition, that our First Parents had continued in their Primitive and Original State of Righteousness.

(5.) God might ordain that all Men should become liable to Eternal Misery by the Fall of our First Parents, and that those who would not accept of Means appointed of Salvation by Faith in Christ, to rescue them from it, should perish eternally. We no sooner read of the Fall of Man, but Christ is forthwith promised, even before the Curse was denounced upon *Adam* and *Eve* for their Offence; the Seed of the Woman is immediately promised to bruise the Serpents Head, and afterwards the Judgment is denounced, first upon *Eve* and then upon *Adam* for their Transgression; and the Seed of the Womans bruising the Serpent's Head, is to be understood of Victory over our Spiritual Enemies, and that Conquest which should be obtained over
Death

Death and Hell by Christ. For the Temporal Punishment which was to befall *Adam* and *Eve* and their Posterity, is afterwards added, and therefore this Promise cannot be understood of a Deliverance from that, but from the wrath of God, and of Redemption from Sin upon Repentance under whatever condition of this Life.

The Consequence of the Sin of our First Parents is to entail Grief, and Trouble, and Labour, and Pain upon their Posterity, and a frail and infirm Nature, exposed to Temptations, and destitute of the Aids of Grace, and the presence of God in their Hearts, incapable of Heaven, and in no capacity of avoiding Hell without Christ's Merits. But Christ was at that very time promised to take away all the Curse and Vengeance consequent upon the Transgression of our First Parents, nay, his Death was pre-ordained and determined beforehand. For Christ is *the Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World*, Rev. xiii. 8. *Who verily was fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World.* 1 Pet. i. 20. He was Slain in the determinate Counsel, and fore-knowledge of God, even before the Fall of our First Parents came to pass: the whole Scheme and Design of Man's Salvation was laid from all Eternity in God's Counsel and Decree, he foresaw that Man would fall, and he determined to send his Son to redeem him, and this he had determined to do so long be-
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fore the Fall of Man, even by an eternal Decree. So that the Goodness and Wisdom of God had effectually provided against the ill consequences, to the Salvation of Mankind by the Fall in all that obey him; and made it impossible that *Adam's* Posterity should become eternally Miserable, and Tormented in Hell Fire, but through their own Fault. For tho' we learn from the Scriptures, that Infants are *by Nature born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath*, yet, whatever the Effects of that Wrath may be, we have no Ground to conclude, that any one shall be condemned, to the Flames and Pains of Hell, without his own Personal and Actual Guilt. The Redemption of the World by Christ was decreed from Eternity, and was actually promised before any Child of *Adam* was born, and even before the Curse was denounced upon our First Parents, and a Remedy was from the beginning provided against all that Misery, which was brought upon Mankind by their Transgression.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the Eternity of Hell Torments.

THere is nothing in Religion which has been thought by many, more liable to
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Objections than the Eternity of Hell Torments: And yet I shall undertake to prove that they are plainly consistent, not only with the Justice, but with the Equity and Mercy of God.

I. I shall prove the Eternity of Hell Torments to be consistent with the Justice of God from these Arguments. 1. Because both Rewards and Punishments are alike proposed to our Choice. 2. Because the Rewards are Eternal as well as the Punishments. 3. Because it was necessary that the Sanction of the Divine Laws should be by Eternal Rewards and Punishments. (4) Because it is necessary that Eternal Punishments should be inflicted upon the Wicked, according to this Sanction.

1. Both Rewards and Punishments are alike proposed to our Choice. It is certainly consistent with Infinite Justice, to set before Men Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, and then to deal with them according to their own Choice. And none will fall into a State of Everlasting Misery, but such as shall be convinced in their own Consciences of the Justice of God's Proceedings with them: And this conviction will prove one great part of their Punishment, when they shall consider that they Perish only by their own Fault, that they were wilful and obstinate to their own Ruine; that no Promises, no
 Threats

Threats could reclaim them. And this is all that the strictest Justice can require, to deal with Men according to their own Choice, to let them chuse their own Condition of Happiness or Misery, and to proceed in such a manner with Sinners, as that they shall be convinced themselves that there is no Injustice done them.

2. The Rewards are Eternal as well as the Punishments. If the Rewards on the one hand had not born a just proportion to the Punishments on the other, the Cause had been different, and it had seemed hard to suffer Eternal Torments for a short Life of Sin, if there had not been Eternal Happiness proposed to as short a Life of Virtue and Righteousness. But since the Rewards and the Punishments are equal, it is not necessary that there should be an exact proportion between the Offence and the Punishment considered in it self, and without respect had to the Rewards; because the Reward being Eternal, answers the opposite Punishment on the other Part. Thus Men are wont to set so much Loss against so much Gain; and no Man pities him that might have gained as much as he has lost, if it had not been his own Fault, tho' the loss be never so great, and depended upon never so small and short a Tryal.

It may seem an hard Case, that a Man should lose his Life for but going out of a
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City, when he could do no hurt by it, nor intended to do any: and this was the Case of *Shimei*; but he had forfeited his Life before to *David*, who had spar'd; and he had been afterwards engag'd, it seems, in other ill Practices, and had probably been concern'd with *Joab* and others in setting up *Adonijah*, (for it was another *Shimei*, the Son of *Elah*, of whom it is said, that he was not with *Adonijah*. *1 Kings* i. 8. iv. 18.) and *David* gives *Solomon* the same Direction concerning these two Men. *1 Kings* ii. 5, 8. *Solomon* therefore sets him this Condition, and he was to expect to live upon no other Terms, but his keeping within these Bounds, which by the Confession of *Shimei* himself was a good saying. *1 Kings* ii. 38. that is, he was glad of it, and could expect no kinder Usage. And if *Solomon* had proposed some great Reward to him, upon Condition, that he had kept within the City, he had been not only just, but very gracious and bountiful to him in it. I am confident any condemn'd Malefactor would think so. The Case of Mankind is like this, but infinitely more gracious on God's part, and more provoking on ours. The very best of us were in Sin, and have often forfeited our Salvation to the Divine Justice; and God by his Sovereign Power and Authority over us might have proposed any Terms of Reconciliation: But he has been pleased to appoint, that our everlasting State of Happiness or
Misery

Misery should depend upon the Moral Terms of Vertue and Vice, and to set everlasting Happiness against everlasting Misery; and no man shall be sentenced to Hell Torments; but he might have been as happy as he shall find himself to be miserable:

Both the (a) Jews and (b) Heathens had a Notion of eternal Rewards and Punishments, as well as Christians; and the eternity of the latter was the great Impediment, which Epicurus endeavour'd to remove out of the way, to the free Enjoyment of Men's Lusts. For whatever some have said in behalf of Epicurus, his own word produced (*) by Tully, too plain to be evaded, shew, that he did place all Happiness in sensual Pleasures, only. he was willing to enjoy them as quietly and securely as he could; and for this Reason laid down divers Rules by way of expedient to keep the Mind in Peace, void of all Auxiety in this Life, and of all Hopes or Fears of a future State: The prevailing Belief of the eternal Punishments of wicked Men after Death was enough to ruine all his Philosophy; and therefore this was by all means to be removed, which yet he was never able to effect. So that this was a thing sufficiently known to make all men sensible of what they must expect would be the consequence of Sin. And what God has threatned so long before, and has given Men time, and Opportunity, and Ability to avoid, they cannot fall under, but thro' their own Wilfulness and Misbehaviour; and

(a) Isa. xxxiii. 14. lxvi. 34. Dan. x. 2.

(b) Plat. in Phed. Lucret. lib. i. v. 112. Diog. Laert. in Pythag. self. Hist. Navigat. in Tr. fl. c. 16. Terij apud Orig. i. l. viii. Abr. Roger de la vie & des Mœurs des Epicur. c. 21.

(*) Tusc. Qu. lib. iii.

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can have no reason to complain, when it comes upon them.

3. It was necessary that the Sanction of the Divine Laws should be by eternal Rewards and Punishments. The Sanction of all Laws is by Rewards and Punishments, and the Design of appointing Punishments is to affright Men from Sin, as the end of Rewards is to invite them to Obedience. The only true Measure and just Proportion therefore between the Crime and the Punishment, is the suitableness of the Punishment to enforce Obedience to the Law, and cause it to be duly observed. For if the Law be good and necessary, and cannot be so well and so effectually obeyed without a very severe Punishment to enforce it; the Severity of the Punishment is so far from Cruelty, that it is a just and wise Provision to secure Obedience to the Law, and procure all the Good design'd by it. Thus we always judge in Humane Laws: A man is condemn'd to lose his Life for taking from another that, which he perhaps could very well spare; but we are all agreed in the Justice of making such Examples, because we find that Men can scarce be secure in their Lives and Estates, notwithstanding the Severity of such Laws. And if the Terrors of everlasting Torments will not frighten Men from Sin, what effect would a less Punishment denounced have had upon them? If men can but once perswade themselves that the Torments of Hell are not so terrible, they freely

ly give themselves up to all Licentiousness; and we know how fond Men of wicked Lives are of such Doctrines. God therefore perfectly understanding the Temper and Inclination, the Stubbornness and Perverseness of Mens Hearts, so prone to Vice, and so backward to all that is good; foresaw that a less Punishment threatned would not prevail with Men to forsake their Sins, and get to Heaven.

And with what Face can that Man object that the Torments of Hell are too great and intolerable, who, as terrible as they are, lives still secure and undisturb'd in his Sins? If they are so great that he complains of them, as unjust, Why doth he not leave his Sins? If he doth not forsake his Sins, they are not too great, since they have not attained that End upon him, for which the Punishment is denounced, *viz.* his Repentance and Amendment of Life! But if he doth not believe their Eternity, and therefore continues in his Sins, this shews, how necessary the Denouncing, and how necessary the Belief of eternal Punishments is. *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked Servant: Thou knewest that I was an austere Man, wherefore then didst thou not do as thou wast commanded?*

4. It is necessary that eternal Punishments should be inflicted upon the Wicked according to the Sanction of the Divine Laws by eternal Rewards and Punishments. We find by sad Experience, how little effect the Punish-

nishments now threatned have upon too many Men, and if they were less dreadful they would be so much the less regarded. So that it appears, that the appointment of eternal Punishments was but necessary to keep Men from Sin, and what God's Wisdom saw necessary to appoint, his Justice and Truth will make it necessary for him to inflict: For what he has so often and so solemnly declared, he can never depart from, but will certainly execute it. The Promises and Threatnings relating this Life are conditional, and are expressly declared to be so, *Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* because in this Life Men are changeable from Good to Bad; or from Bad to Good; but the Threatnings as well as the Promises concerning the other Life must be absolute and unconditional, because they relate to an unchangeable final State, which will admit of no alteration either in the Wicked or the Righteous. It is not therefore because God can recede from his Threatnings rather than from his Promises; that *Nineveh* was spared, but because all Threatnings belonging to the State of this Life imply a condition of Repentance, upon which they are not to be inflicted, as *Jonah* and the *Ninevites* themselves well understood: but then all Promises too, which concern this Life are under the like condition, and are not to be performed upon the Disobedience of those, to whom they are made, as we are assured by God's express Declaration. But

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what is threatned or promised to Men to befall them after this Life, is promised or threatned to befall them, when they shall be in a fixt unalterable State, and therefore must be incapable of any Condition or Reserve to be implied in it. For when Men continue the same they were at the time when God's Promises and Threatnings were declared to them, his Promises and Threatnings always take place in this World according to the full extent and importance of the Words in which they were delivered; and therefore they must thus take place in the next World, into which, when Men are once entred, they must for ever continue equally fit Objects either of the Divine Promises or Threatnings, as they were at the time of their Death. The Point is, that God never changes, but Men are changeable in this Life; and both his Promises and Threatnings, which concern Men here, suppose them such, and therefore *Rewards* are withheld, or Punishments remitted in this World, as Men fall into Wickedness, or become reclaim'd from it. But in the other World, where the State of Men is unalterable from good or bad, vertuous or vicious, both the Promises and Threatnings of God must be punctually fulfilled, and can admit of no Condition or Reservation. God has sworn that those, who will not believe and obey him, shall *not enter into his Rest*. Heb. iii. 18. and what he has once sworn is irrevocable. *Heb.*

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vi. 17. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.* 2 Tim. ii. 13. And it is not only *threatned* that the Wicked shall suffer eternal Punishment, but it is likewise expressly *foretold*, that the wicked shall be sentenced to *everlasting fire* at the Day of Judgment, and that they *shall go away into everlasting Punishment*. Matth. xxv. 41, 46. To leave no room for hopes of any End or Abatement of the Punishment, we have our Saviour's express Declaration, that the Sentence shall be pass according to the Threatning, and that the everlasting Punishment which is threatned, shall be certainly executed upon the wicked. Our Judge has beforehand declar'd, what Sentence he will pass; the Terms whereof are therefore as unalterable, as if it were already pronounc'd. He has declared that the Punishments of the wicked, as well as the Rewards of the righteous shall be eternal, as directly and positively as he has said any thing else relating to the last Judgment, or concerning any other part of his Gospel, and we have as little reason to imagine that his express and repeated Affirmation is capable of a reserved Meaning in this particular, as in any other matter whatsoever.

Some of the Benefits and Advantages which are consequent to the Punishments of this World are precedent to those of the next: **Here** Men are punished for their own Amendment, or for the Advantage and Security of others

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others or for both: In the next World the actual inflicting of Punishments is not for these ends, but they were threatned for these, and they must be inflicted when they have been once threatned and declared by God, who cannot lye. It is for the Repentance of Sinners, and for the Benefit of Good Men in preserving them in the ways of Vertue, and securing them from the Pride and Malice of the Wicked that Hell should be threatned; but because it is the final and eternal State of the Wicked, it cannot be for their Amendment after the Execution of its Torments upon them, and Good Men being once out of the Power of Temptations, and placed beyond the Malice of the Wicked, can no longer have any Protection or Advantage from the Punishments denounced against impenitent Sinners; but whether the Advantages arising from Punishments be before or after the inflicting of Punishments, there is the same necessity for the appointing, and consequently for the inflicting them, *viz.* The Good of Mankind in keeping Men from Sin, and leaving those without excuse who will not be restrained from it, and work out their own Salvation. But another end of Punishment is, that Satisfaction for the violation of the Laws may be made to the supreme Authority which is despised and affronted by it: And the vindication of God's Honour and Authority, and of his Truth and Holiness in his Hatred and De-

Detestation of Sin, and his indignation against Sinners, is manifested by the actual Punishments of the Damned, and it would be an Argument of the contrary to all this, if they were threatned and not inflicted.

And the Number of Persons to be thus Punished doth not alter the Case, but only shews that many are concerned in it; and if the case be the same, the Justice must be the same too, tho' the Persons be never so many upon whom it is executed. That which is Just towards one, or Merciful towards one, is Just or Merciful towards never so many Thousands. For Justice and Mercy consist in the Nature of things, not in the greater or lesser Number of Persons to whom they are extended. And tho' Multitudes of Criminals are apt to move compassion in Men; yet this proceeds partly from the Sympathy and Frailty of Human Nature, which is mightily swayed by Number and Multitude to do either Good or Evil; partly from the Nature of Human Affairs: For to destroy Multitudes would depopulate Cities and Countries, and would be an Affliction to Multitudes of Innocent Persons, their Friends and Relations. But it is not so in the present Case; there will be no want of Numbers in Heaven, and the Righteous shall be Everlastingly happy, and shall perceive no diminution of their Happiness by reason of the Damnation of such as were never so dear to them in this World.

And Mercy and Pity is not a Passion in God as it is in Men, but a Perfection, it is the highest Reason and Equity; and therefore tho' the Misery of Sinners be never so severe, and the number of the Miserable never so great; yet when the Equity and reasonableness of the case doth not require it, there is nothing to move God for their Relief, because he acts by the standing Rules of Reason and Wisdom, not by any Fondness and Weakness of Passion.

2. I come now to shew the Mercy of God in his inflicting Eternal Torments upon Sinners. Strict Justice has a severe Aspect, and it may seem hard for frail Man to abide the Sentence, that he may in strictness of Justice deserve. But from the Justice of God it is natural for us to appeal to his Mercy, and thither he allows us to appeal, but not so, as to expect that he should be so merciful as not to be just, or should forget that he is the Supreme Governour of the World, whilst he extends his Mercy to the Offending and Criminal part of it. Punishment is necessary to all Government, and God as Governour of the World must inflict Punishments, and what these are to be, it belongs to his Sovereign Wisdom to appoint.

And Eternal Torments were appointed for the Punishment of Sin, not only out of a very just, but even out of a gracious Design, because nothing less than the Threatnings of them would

would keep Men from Sin, and from that Misery which is the unavoidable consequence of it, and so bring them to Heaven. It is an Antient and true Observation which (c) St. *Chrysoſtom* has made, that there is Mercy even in the threats of Eternal Vengeance, because nothing less could have brought many Men to Heaven. For there is no doubt to be made but many will be there, who shall have cause to thank God for this, as the thing which first opened their Eyes, and moved them to Repentance, and thereby brought them to Bliss and Glory. And the same Mercy was extended to those that Perish, and would not make the same use of it, which if they had done they had never perished: Tho' Heaven and Hell (d) says St. *Chrysoſtom*, be contrary to each other, yet they both aim at the same end, the Salvation of Mankind, the Joys of Heaven invite Men to it, and the Fear of Hell forces those to Heaven, who otherwise would be regardless of their own Happiness.

God has used the most proper and prevailing Means to convince Sinners of their Danger, and to persuade them to escape it, and obtain Salvation. We have everlasting Rewards and everlasting Punishments proposed to our Choice; We are exhorted with the greatest Earnestness, and mov'd and assisted with the continual Influences and Aids of Grace, to avoid the Punishments, and are as

(c) *Chryſt.*
ad ſtagir.
lib. 1. Tom.
6. ſav. E.
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(d) *Chryſt.*
ad Pop. An-
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earnestly invited, and as sufficiently enabled to obtain the Rewards. *God hath no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live;* as he solemnly and with an Oath declares by his Prophet, *Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.* It is His principal Intention and Desire, that all Men should be saved: He has proclaimed Himself to be *the Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, and Transgression, and Sin;* but then it is added, that he *will by no means clear the guilty,* that is, the obstinate and impenitent Sinner. *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* He exhorts, he invites, he promises, he threatens; he promises eternal Happiness, and threatens eternal Misery, to give all the Discouragement to Vice, and all the Enducement to Religion and Vertue which is possible. Last of all, he has sent his Son to instruct us in our Duty, and to confirm all this to us, and to purchase our Redemption with his own Blood.

God deals with Men in the plainest and most condescending manner, He lays their Duty before them with the Rewards and Punishments annex'd, and both eternal, the better to secure them in their Obedience, and force them to be happy: and then he takes Men at no Advantage, but makes all reasonable Allowances, in consideration of the frailty of Humane Nature, and in condescension to their

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Infirmities; He exacts not absolute Perfection, nor any impossible Obedience, but requires, that, tho' we cannot live without Sin, yet we should not sin wilfully and obstinately; that we should not allow and indulge our selves in Sin, and should repent if we have done so; He requires a faithful and sincere Diligence in all the Parts of our Duty, which is no more than what every Father and Master expects from his Children and Servants: When Men have sinned, God admits of their Repentance, and if after Repentance they sin again, yet still they shall be accepted upon a renew'd Repentance: nay, after a long course of Sin, a sincere Repentance may reconcile them to God, and no Repentance can be too late, that is sincere. It is extremely dangerous indeed to defer our Repentance for one Moment, because our Lives are so uncertain, and we may provoke God to that degree, that he will no longer afford us an Opportunity to repent, nor bestow that Grace upon us, which is necessary to Repentance. But this is after repeated Provocations, and an obstinate rejecting of the Goodness of God, which leads Men to repentance: And these are the Terms of the Gospel, that *when the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive.* There is Great Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, and the returning Prodigal is received with the greatest Fa-

vour

your and Tenderness. If we will be obedient, we have the Assistance of God's Grace, and if we have done amiss, yet His grace is offered us to bring us to Repentance, and we may be pardoned upon sincere Resolutions of Obedience for the future. But if Men either disbelieve or disregard all these things, if they neither care for God's Promises, nor fear his Threatnings; if they trample under foot the Blood of his Son, and grieve his blessed Spirit; if all the Methods of his Mercy and Goodness be lost upon them, there remains no other Remedy, but Justice must have its course. If when they are told so long beforehand, what danger they are in, Men will continue obstinate in their Disobedience, after so many Invitations and Encouragements to Repentance, and after so great Importunity and Forbearance; they can have no reason to complain of the Severity of that Sentence, which they have been so often threatned with, and have as often despised.

Since the Rewards are eternal on the one hand, and the Punishments on the other, the Rewards being proportionable to the Punishments, the Terms are on both sides equal; and since it is in our Power by the Help of the Divine Grace to avoid the Punishments and obtain the Rewards, the Condition is such, as that any wise Man would be thankful for it, and would be glad that such a Prize is put into his hands; so far would he be from complain-

plaining, that the Terrors of Punishments are join'd to the Encouragement of Rewards; that all Motives concur to make him happy, and that God has used all means both inward by his Grace, and outward by his Promises and Threatnings to bring us to Salvation.

I repeat it again, for God himself often repeats it in the Holy Scriptures; God *hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked*, but hath used all means to prevent it, he hath provided Heaven for us, and threatned Hell, if we will not be perswaded to go to Heaven. If Men will neglect the Means of their Salvation, and will not repent and turn to him, notwithstanding all his most loving and compassionate Exhortations, and the Death of his own Son for them, if neither Heaven can invite, nor Hell frighten them from their Sins, they must thank themselves only for that Destruction, which they bring upon themselves. The Appeal which God so long ago made to the *House of Israel*, may at the last Day be alledg'd to Sinners. Ye have said, that *the way of the Lord is not equal*. Hear now, O ye Sinners, *Is not my way equal*, have not *your ways* been *unequal*? And the ways of God shall then appear so equal, and the ways of wicked Men so unreasonable and perverse, that their own Consciences shall bear Witness against them; and He that died to save them will pronounce the Sentence of eternal Damnation upon them.

CHAP. XV.

Of the Jewish Law.

There is nothing which vulgar Minds are more surpris'd and offended at, nor at which Men of Understanding and Experience are less inclin'd to wonder or take Offence, than the several Laws and Customs of divers Nations in the different Ages and Climates of the World: The Habit, the Language, the Letters, and manner of Writing; the Food, the Complexion, the Features of the Body, and Disposition of the Mind are various in different Countries and Ages. And therefore it is no wonder that the Political and Ceremonial Part of the *Jewish* Law, which was given so many Ages ago, and in a Country, which is at this Day very different in its Customs from ours, should be as different from the Customs in use amongst us, as the Age and Climate. For when God doth appoint Laws for Men, he must be supposed to appoint such as are suitable to the Necessities and Occasions of those for whom they are made. And some who have travelled into the Eastern

Eastern Countries, which are not so variable in their Fashions and Way of Living, as the Western Nations are, have found great advantages both from the Nature of the Inhabitants, and of the Climates, and from the Customs and Manners of those Parts of the World, for the explication of divers places of Scripture, which depend upon the knowledge of those Countries.

Now the whole *Jewish* Law may be divided into the *Moral*, the *Political* or *Judicial*, and the *Ceremonial* Law. The Moral Part of *Moses's* Law, which is contain'd in the Ten Commandments, and enjoyns our Duty towards God and towards our Neighbour, is just and holy beyond all Controversy or Exception. And the Political or Judicial Part with the Ceremonial was adapted to the Circumstances and Necessities of those Ages and that Nation. And if the Moral Part be absolutely most Divine and Holy, and the Positive Institutions both Political and Ritual, were the most fit and proper for that Time and Government; that is, if they were the best that could be, for those Ages and that People; then the whole Body of the *Mosaic* Law is without all just Exception. And that this is so, it will be evident, if we observe the Reasons upon which the Positive Laws amongst the *Jews* were instituted.

1. The Judicial Laws, relating to the Administration of Justice in the *Jewish* Government.

ment, are so reasonable, that they have been transcrib'd into the Laws of the wisest Heathen Nations, as hath been particularly shewn by Learned Men. There are but few of the Judicial Laws which have been objected against, and these have been often and effectually vindicated. The Law which seems most harsh and rigorous is that of Retaliation; which yet was the most antient way of Punishment in most Nations, and was not unjust for the Laws to inflict, tho' it was sinful in the Persons injured to require it out of a Desire of Revenge, and with a Delight to gratify themselves in their Enemies Sufferings. For if it be just to punish the taking away of a little Money with Death, how can it be unjust to inflict the same Punishment for the depriving a Man of his Eye? And if it be not unjust to make Death the Punishment of striking out an Eye (and what Nation doth not punish much less Injuries with Death?) How can it be unjust to punish the Offender with the Loss of his own Eye? One of the severest Laws that ever was known amongst a civilised People, was that of the Twelve Tables, which

(a) Sunt enim quaedam non laudabilia Natura, sed jure concessa: ut in xii. Tabulis Debitoris Corpus inter Creditores dividi licuit; quam legem mos Publicus repudiavit. *Quintil. Institut. lib. iii. cap. 6.*

gave leave to (a) the Creditors among the *Romans* to divide the Debtor's Body between them, if he were insolvent: This was one of those things which are not commendable in

their

their own Nature, but yet are allow'd and permitted, as *Quintilian* has observ'd upon particular Reasons: but this Law was laid aside by a general Disuse, and (b) that of Retaliation among the *Jews* was interpreted by them, according to an Antient Tradition, to be meant not of strict Retaliation, but of a Compensation to be made in Money to the Person maimed. (b) *Lights. Hor. Hebraic ad Mat. v. 38.*

2. Many of those Rites which may seem strange to us, were so far from being esteem'd absurd, that they became common in those Countries, as Circumcision was antiently, and is to this day practis'd in many Parts of the World; (c) the *Aegyptians* and many other Nations abstain'd from Swines Flesh, and the *Aethiopians* from most of the Meats which were forbidden the *Jews*; such Abstinencies being necessary for Health in those Countries. Frequent Washings likewise are requisite in hot Countries for Health and Refreshment; Religion prescrib'd only the Time, and Manner, and particular Occasion of it, the Thing itself is Natural. And when we see such a Body of Laws of so great Antiquity, well contriv'd and wisely instituted for the Substance of them; if there be in some of them any thing peculiar and singular; tho' they were but the Laws of a Man, yet common Modesty and Candor might make us conclude, that so wise a Lawgiver must have some good Reason for those particular Laws, which at

this

this distance of Time and Place cannot be so obvious to us; but it would be Rashness to suspect that he had no sufficient Reason for those, who appears to have enacted the rest with so great Wisdom. Thus it would be natural for a Man of tolerable Modesty to conclude, even concerning a System of Humane Laws, tho' no probable Account could be given of many of them. But when God is the Lawgiver, this ought to silence all Disputes, that they are his Laws, and therefore must be wise and good for that People, at that Time, and in their Condition and Circumstances. The Will and Authority of God, without any other Reason, is sufficient of itself, in any Case to be alledg'd, and it may be fit in some Cases, that we should have no other Reason to produce.

It is a rash and dangerous thing to conclude, that God did not command this or that, because we do not see why it should be commanded; this is to say, that we will not believe God to be the Author of any thing which we do not like, or would not have to be His. Are we wont to argue thus about Humane Laws? Would it be any Excuse for a disobedient Subject to say, that in his Opinion, such Laws were not fit to be made, and that therefore he would not believe his Prince had made such Laws; when he had all due notice and full evidence, that he had appointed them, but was resolved to reject the whole

Body

Body of Laws upon the account of some which he did not fancy, which yet were obsolete and out of Date? Do we not allow that Reasons of State and of Government may require many things to be done, and many Laws to be made, which it doth not belong to private Men to be curious about, and which the greatest Part of the Subjects are not able to comprehend? And are not God's Thoughts infinitely above the Thoughts of the wisest Men, and infinitely farther out of our Reach, than the Counsels of the most Prudent and Politick Prince can be above the Understanding of his meanest and most ignorant Subjects? How shall we dare then to reject any Divine Revelation, because it is not agreeable in every particular to our Thoughts and Notions of things? But I shall enquire however into the Reasons and Grounds, which appear to us at this distance of Time for the Ceremonial Laws, and I doubt not but these will be sufficient to justify them to all impartial Men.

1. The Ceremonial Laws were given the *Jews* to prevent them from falling into Idolatry. For they were design'd to distinguish the *Jews* in many things from the Neighbouring Nations, and to hinder them from following their Idolatrous Customs. And the Customs of the (d) People of *Israel*, and of the Nations round about them, and the several sorts of Idolatry practis'd amongst the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites* must needs render the

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(d) Summa vero rei hæc est: quæ in præcedentibus tibi dixi, dogmata & ritus Zabiorum hodie nobis esse incognitos; itaque licent nos Historiæ & annales temporum illorum. Quod si autem illa, omniaque particularia, quæ in illis temporibus acciderunt, nobis essent cognita, multaque in lege divinâ rerum particularium rationes scire possemus. Maimon. More Nevoch. Pars 3. c. 50.

particular occasions and grounds of those Laws, which were made to restrain them from Idolatry, difficult to be understood by all who are unacquainted with the Rites and Idolatrous Worship of those Nations. But of those Laws it is enough for ordinary Readers to know, that they had respect to the Idolatries then practised amongst the bordering Nations, and this the Scripture often tells us. *Lev.* xviii. 3. xx. 23, 24, 25. *Deut.* xii. 30, 31. xiv. 1, 2. xviii. 9. (*) *Origen* has observed, that those Beasts were by the Law of *Moses* declared to be unclean, by which the *Aegyptians* and other Heathen Nations were wont to make their Divinations, and that most besides were allow'd of as clean. And other Particulars have been made out by Learned Men from the best Remains of Antiquity.

(x) *Orig.*
contra Cels.
lib. iv.

And as the *Jews* were taught to look upon the Idolatrous Nations as polluted, and had Laws given them purposely to hinder them from too dangerous a freedom and familiarity with Idolaters; so these Laws might be easily practised when they lived within themselves, separated from other People, but are now become unpracticable since they are dispersed amongst all Nations, and the Laws which were adapted to the State and Circumstances of the *Jewish* Nation and Government, must be out of Date, since the Dissolution of their Government and the Dispersion of the whole People into other Countries. These
Laws

Laws may well seem strange now to us, when they pretend to practise them, but this ought to be attributed not to the Laws themselves, but to their Adherence to them when the Obligation to observe them is so long since expired, and when the People of the *Jews* are in a condition in which many of their Laws cannot, and others were never designed to be observed. Some (*) of their *Rabbins* have held that things forbidden by the Law might be eaten by them out of the Land of *Judea*; and the Reason why *Daniel* refused to Eat of the *King's Meat* and Drink of his *Wine*, was, because it was the Custom of (e) Antient Times, and particularly in those Countries, to consecrate all which they did either Eat or Drink to their Gods, by putting part of it on the Altar, or casting it into the Fire; so that to Eat of such Meats or to Drink of such Wine had been to partake of things offered to Idols. And in the *Babylonish* Captivity they were not under so great Difficulties in the Observation of the Laws concerning Clean and Unclean Meats, as they have lain under since their total and final Dispersion, for the Favour which God gave them with the Heathens amongst whom they lived, and the Multitudes which were carried away and lived together, afforded them the conveniency of following their own Rites and Customs in eating such Meats only as were not forbidden or defiled: And then they were restrained from Idolatry by these Abstinences

(x) *Grot.*
ad Act. x.
15.

(e) *Grot.*
ad Dan. i.
8. *Casaub.*
ad Athen.
lib. 1. c.
11.

cies, and they became the more remarkable in the Eyes of the Heathens, and their wonderful Zeal for their Religion even in the small. It matters was apt to make those among whom they were Captives, the more earnest to enquire into the greater and more substantial and excellent Things of their Law. And these were Reasons which were worth their submitting to great Inconveniencies, by adhering to their legal Observances in other Countries. But now these and all other Reasons are ceased, and the Case is altered, since they are a despised People, dispersed in small Parties over the face of the whole Earth; and therefore the Abstinencies of the *Jews* are apt to be look'd upon as absurd by those with whom they converse, that will not be at the pains to consider the Grounds upon which they were at first instituted, and that they are no longer Practicable, nor designed to be practised, by their Original Institution.

2. Circumcision, Purifications, Abstinencies, Sacrifices, and other Rites enjoyned by the Law of *Moses*, were not required for their own sake, or for any real Vertue and Efficacy supposed to be in the things themselves, to recommend Men to God's Favour, but were Instituted to signify the inward Purity and Integrity of the Heart, and by outward observances and sensible Things, to lead a Carnal and sensual People to the Knowledge and Practice of things Spiritual. The Children of

Israel

Israel are sometimes said to be *Sanctified*, that is, to be separated and set apart for God's Honour and Service by these Rites and Ceremonies, both because they were hereby distinguished from other Nations, and because this Ritual Worship was appointed as a Means to lead them to internal Sanctity and Holiness of Mind, and to procure in them an Awe and Reverence of that Majesty, by whose Commandment it was to be observed.

Circumcision was appointed as a Federal Rite, and as a Token and Pledge of the Covenant between God and *Abraham*, and his seed after him, of which the *Messias* was to be born. And as it was a Sacrament of the Covenant between God and the People of *Israel*, so it had Respect to the Nations whom they were to root out; these Nations were notorious for the Sins of the Flesh, *Lev. xviii. 24.* and there is a peculiar significancy in the Rite of Circumcision of the Restraint and Excision of Carnal Lusts. It was declared by *Moses* himself to signify the Circumcision of the Heart, *Lev. xxvi. 41. Deutr. x. 16. xxx. 6.* and likewise by the Prophets *Jer. iv. 4. vi. 10. Ezek. xlv. 7.* They expound Circumcision in a Mystical and Spiritual Sense; and according to this notion of Circumcision *St. Paul* maintains that the true Circumcision is among the Christians, whereof the *Jewish* Circumcision of the Flesh was but a Figure, *Rom. ii. 28. Phil. iii. 3.*

The Pardon of Sin upon Repentance is expressed in Scripture by cleansing and purifying, *Psal.* xix. 12. li. 2. *Isai.* i. 16. *Jer.* iv. 14. *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25, 26. by which is denoted to us that outward cleansing of the Flesh design'd to put Men in mind of the inward Purification and Cleansing from Sin and from Unrighteousness, because this defiles the Soul, and makes it loathsome in God's Sight, *2 Cor.* vii. i. *Jam.* iv. 8.

Abstinency from things in a Legal Account, *Common and Unclean* was appointed to restrain Men by Symbolical Instructions from Sin, which pollutes the Mind, and the Moral (e) signification of such Prohibitions is implied in the Proverb alleged by *St. Peter* concerning Dogs and Swine, which are two of the Animals prohibited the *Jews*, *2 Pet.* ii. 22.

(e) Quid ergo est? In Animalibus mores depinguntur humani, & A&us & Voluntates. --- in Animalibus per legem quasi quoddam humanæ vitæ speculum constitutum est. Novatian. de lib. Judaic. c. 3.

Sacrifices and Offerings were to represent to them, that they depended upon God for all they had, and therefore they were to offer something of every kind in Acknowledgment, that they had received all which they enjoyed from him. They were likewise designed to signify to them that their Sins deserved Death, even *Everlasting Burnings*. The daily Sacrifices were to be Remembrances to them of that Acceptable and Living Sacrifice, which they

they were to offer to God, *a broken and a contrite Heart*, and an Innocent and Blameless Life, *Pf.* iv. 4, 5. *Cxli.* 2. And the Scriptures frequently testify how little Pleasure God took in the Sacrifices of Beasts, and in Burnt-Offerings, Incense, and Oblations, and how small Regard he had to them: He never required these things for themselves and upon their own Account, or because there is any thing acceptable to him in them, *Psal.* xl. 6, 4. l. 8, li. 17. To do Justice and love Mercy is more acceptable to God than all Sacrifices, *Prov.* xxi. 3. *Jer.* vii. 22, 23. This is so evident throughout the whole Old Testament, that the Scribes and Pharisees in the most superstitious and corrupt Age of the *Jewish Church*, could not but confess that the Love of God and of our Neighbour, is of more Account in God's sight than all the Sacrifices and Oblations in the World, *Mark* xii. 37. The Ceremonial Part of the Law was always to give place to the Moral: thus Acts of Charity were to be done, tho' it happened that they were performed by the violation of the *Jewish Sabbath*, and the Prophets were, upon necessary Causes, held exempted from the Legal Observances. *For I desired Mercy and not Sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than Burnt-Offerings.* *Hos.* vi. 6.

3. All the *Jewish Worship* appointed by the Mosaical Law was Typical of Christ and his Gospel. By a *Type* we are to understand the

Likeness and Resemblance which one thing has to another, as that of the Impression to the Seal, or of the Shadow to the Substance, or of the Picture to the Man whom it represents. Thus the Death of Christ was typified or resembled, or represented and prefigured by the Death of the Beasts which were Sacrificed; they were signs appointed to keep up the Remembrance that Christ was to be Sacrificed, and were very apt and proper to put Men in Mind of it. It was acknowledged by the *Jews*, and received from the Beginning as a certain Rule for the Interpretation of Scripture that there was a Typical as well as a Literal Sense of it, relating to the *Messias* and his Kingdom. Circumcision was to signify to them that Christ was to be born of the Seed of *Abraham*, to whom Circumcision was first enjoined upon the Promise made to him of *Isaac*, from whom Christ was to descend: And the Blood shed in Circumcision was Typical of that Blood which Christ was to shed for us.

The most probable Account of the Original of Sacrifices is, that they were at first of Divine Institution, and were appointed soon after the Fall of Man as Types of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, who was promised to be sent to die for the Expiation of Sin. For tho' there be a natural Reason why we should not Offer unto the Lord our God of that which doth Cost us nothing, but should

Honour

Honour the Lord with our Substance. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Prov. iii. 9. and should present some part of the best of what we have, in Devotion and Gratitude to him, from whom we have received the Whole: Yet no sufficient Reason can be given why Beasts should be Slain in Sacrifice, before they were used, as far as it appears, for Food by Men, or how it should be imagined that God would accept of the Blood of any Creature, or be pleased with the taking from it that Life which he had given it, or why a peculiar Efficacy towards the Expiation of Sin was supposed to be in the Blood, unless it had been upon the Account of the Blood of Christ which was Typically prefigured by the Blood of Beasts. By Faith whereof *Abel* offered his Sacrifice and was accepted, Heb. xi. 4. The Paschal Lamb was a plain Type of Christ, for which Reason Christ is styled, *the Lamb of God and our Passover which is Sacrificed for us*, Jo. i. 29. 1 Cor. v. 7. And for the same Reason the Feast of the Passover was appointed to the *Israelites* just before their Escape out of *Egypt* to be a Type to them of that Deliverance which Christ was to accomplish, of which their Deliverance out of *Egypt* was but a Figure. *Aaron* was a Type of Christ, and all the Sacrifices he offered were Types of Christ's Sacrifice upon the Cross: They were appointed to take away the Legal Uncleaness, to restore Men to a State of Legal Purity,

riety, which was Typical of Moral and Spiritual Purity, and to put the Legal Worshipers into such a Condition as the Law required to qualify them for the *Legal Service and Worship*; and herein they were Figures of that one Sacrifice, which was to be offered up once for all in Attonement for the Sins of all Mankind, *Hebr. ix. 14.* whereby Men might be rendred Capable of paying God an acceptable Service *in Spirit and in Truth.*

Legal Purifications were Typical of that Purification which is by the Blood of Christ, *Tit. ii. 14. 1 John i. 9.* And the Incense ascending signified how the Prayers of the Saints come up before God, *Rev. v. 8. viii. 3, 4.* The State and Dispensation of the Gospel is exprest by the Prophet *Malachi* under the Figure of *Incense* and a *Pure Offering*, *Malach. i. 11.*

The whole Epistle to the *Hebrews* is written upon this subject, to shew that all the Legal Rites and Ceremonial Worship, were but Shadows, and Types, and Figures of Christ, and of that Redemption, Righteousness, and Sanctification, which was to be wrought by him, and that therefore they were to cease when in him they had received their Accomplishment. Their Incense and Purifications, their Sacrifices, their Temple, and the Priests themselves were all but so many Types of Christ and his Kingdom under the Gospel. Christ had been promised to our first Parents imme-

immediately after their Fall, and this Promise had been renewed to *Abraham*, with an Assurance that he should descend from *Isaac*, and Circumcision was instituted as a perpetual mark in the Flesh of that Covenant; and all Sacrifices from the beginning of their Institution were as so many Types and Memorials of the Sacrifice of Christ, which was promised before any Sacrifice had been offered: And more especially that of the Passover at the deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Aegypt* was a lively Representation of our Redemption by the Death of Christ. They had ever this Notion of their legal Worship: *Abraham* to whom Circumcision was appointed, *saw the day* of Christ; he fore-saw his Descent from himself, which was thereby prefigured *and was glad*, *Joh. viii. 56.* And *Moses* by whom the Ceremonial Service was ordained, had so clear a Prospect of the *Messias* and his Kingdom that he *esteemed the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Aegypt*, *Hebr. xi. 26.* Those places of Scripture which the Apostles apply to Christ out of the Old Testament, were at that time by the *Jews* themselves, to whom they Cite them, understood of the *Messias*; they always supposed that whatever was great and Excellent among them, was but a faint and imperfect Resemblance of that Glory and Excellency which was to be in its full Perfection and Accomplishment under the *Messias.*

The Reasonableness and Certainty

4. During this Ceremonial Dispensation, there was a sufficient Revelation of the internal and spiritual Part of Religion: In the Books of *Moses*, the Love of God with all the Heart, and the Love of their Neighbour as of Themselves, is expressly commanded the Children of *Israel*. *Lev. xix. 18. Dent. vi. 5.* The High Priest's Office was to bless the People. *Numb. vi. 23.* and the Office of the Priests and Levites, besides the Ceremonial Service, was to stand every Morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at Even. *1 Chron. xxiii. 30. 2 Chron. xxxi. 2.* and (*) no Sacrifice was ever offered without Prayers. The immortality of the Soul is implied in that Expression, which is often used in the Books of *Moses*, that Men when they died were gathered to their People: which must be understood of their Souls; their Bodies being buried at different places and in divers Countries, not where their Ancestors had been buried. And tho' this and such like Phrases may sometimes signify no more, than their leaving the World, as others had done before them (as most Words and Expressions are often used improperly) and may in some places be applied to ill Men; yet there could never have been any Reason or Foundation for such a Phrase, but from a Supposition of the Soul's Immortality. *Balaam* wish'd to die the Death of the Righteous, and that his last End might be like that of the Righteous. *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

(x) *vid. Outr. de Sacrific. lib. 1. c. 15. s. 9.*

For

For what Reason, but that he might not be miserable, but happy after Death?

A future State was always believ'd by the *Jews*, as revealed to them in the Old Testament, and whatever Texts there may be, which seem to imply the contrary, they are either spoken only by way of Objection, as in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, or else they have no Relation to the State after this Life, either to affirm or deny it; but are to be understood to proceed from that Desire, which pious Men had to honour and glorify God in their several Generations, by restoring his Worship, where it had been neglected, or in propagating his Religion, where it had not been yet known. Thus that good King *Hezekiah*, says to God in his Thanksgiving; *The Grave cannot praise thee, Death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the Pit, cannot hope for thy Truth. The Living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The Father to the Children shall make known thy Truth.* *Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19.* This is spoken with the same Zeal and Spirit, by which he was acted in his Reformation. And when *David* said, *In Death there is no Remembrance of thee, in the Grave, who shall give thee Thanks?* *Psal. vi. 5.* He cannot be supposed to have any Doubtfulness concerning a future State; for in other *Psalms*, he plainly asserts it. *Psal. xvi. 11. xvii. 15.* But his Meaning is explain'd *Psal. xxx. 9.* where he says, *What profit is there in my Blood,*

when

when I go down into the Pit? Shall the Dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy Truth? In our other Translation it is, *Shall the Dust give Thanks to thee?* To give Thanks then to God, is in grateful Acknowledgment for his Mercies; to praise and magnify his Name, and manifest his Truth among Men, which is not to be done in the Grave. God's Dispensations to the People of *Israel*, being with this Design: Pious Men desir'd that their Lives might be prolong'd for this purpose, that they might declare his Truth, and Vindicate and promote his Honour in this World, before they were call'd to the next, where there can be no Opportunity for this Service to God and Benefit to Mankind.

Enoch was taken up alive into Heaven, to be an Example of that Happiness which God has prepar'd for those who walk with him, and pleaseth him. *Gen. v. 24.* And our Saviour *Mark xii. 26.* proves the Resurrection of the Dead from *Exod. iii. 6.* Those for whom God has that peculiar Favour, as to stile Himself *their God*, and to declare this to be *His Name* or Title for ever, and this to be *His Memorial unto all Generations.* *Vers. 15.* we may be assured are not so dead, as utterly to have perish'd: and if their Souls have surviv'd their Bodies, their Bodies likewise must be raised again; forasmuch as the Soul of *Abraham* without his Body is not *Abraham*, but only one part of him: and his Soul could not

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be stil'd *Abraham*, but with respect not only to its past, but to its future Union with his Body: For tho' a part be often put for the whole, yet it always supposes either the present or future Existence of the Whole; but is never put for the whole, when it remains alone, and the rest is utterly and finally extinct. *Abraham* consists of Soul and Body, and therefore God being the God of *Abraham*, is God both of the Soul and Body of *Abraham*; which is an Argument that the Soul of *Abraham* now lives, and that his Body shall live again; for *All live to God.* And he would not have given himself a solemn Title and Denomination from a Man who had no longer any Being; nor from that Part of him, which had utterly perish'd. *I am the God of thy Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* *Abraham* had his Name in Token that he should be a Father of many Nations. *Gen. xvii. 5.* and *Isaac* and *Jacob* were Heirs of the same Promise; and therefore the God of *Abraham* is the God of that Father of Nations, and has a particular Regard to the Bodies (from which those Nations were descended) as well as to the Souls of *Abraham* and his Posterity. *I am the God of Abraham*, not *I was*, but *I am*, which supposes *Abraham* yet to be. *I am* the same God still to him, that *I was* during his Life upon earth; he is still the Object of the Divine Care and Goodness, and therefore shall be rewarded

warded both in Body and Soul. *God is not ashamed to be call'd their God: for he hath prepared for them a City.* Heb. xi. 16. that is, an Habitation in Heaven.

The Children of *Israel* before the giving of the Law were instructed in the Rewards and Punishments of the Life to come; and Temporal Rewards and Punishments were appointed by *Moses*, as Pledges and Types to represent and prefigure to them those of a Future State. For that *Abraham* and the Patriarchs before him, had a true and full Notion of a Life after this, we are certain from *Heb. xi. 10, 13.* And we have as great Certainty, that *Abraham* did instruct *his Children and his Household after him.* Gen. xviii. 19. and *Moses* wrote of *Christ.* Jo. v. 46. Gen. iii. 15. xii. 3. xlix. 10. Deut. xviii. 15, 18.

These things were delivered in the Books of *Moses*, and well understood by the Generality of the *Jews* in all Ages, the *Sadducees* were singular in denying the Resurrection of the Dead, and some other Doctrines, in which all the rest were agreed. But if there were any Obscurity or Difficulty in the Books of *Moses*, they had besides the Priests a constant Succession of Prophets for many Ages to Interpret them, and to maintain and inculcate those Fundamental Doctrines of Religion. The Rewards of Heaven are declared, *Psal. xvi. 11. xvii. 15. Prov. xv. 24. Eccles. xii. 14. Dan. xii. 2, 3.* The Torments of Hell are as-

serted;

serted, *Psal. xvi. 10. Eccles. xi. 9. xii. 14. Isai. xxxiii. 14. Dan. xii. 2.* The Resurrection of the Dead, *Psal. xvii. 15. Isai. xxvi. 19. Ezek. xxxvii. 1. Dan. xii. 2. Hos. xiii. 14.* And in the Book of *Job*, which is of the greatest Antiquity, *Job xiv. 12. xix. 26. 27.* In that Expression that *David* and others *Slept with their Fathers*, is implied not only the Immortality of the Soul, but the Resurrection of the Body. For it implies that there was not a total end of them, but as they Slept so must they awake and rise again, *Psal. xvii. 15.* And this Expression is taken from the Old Testament, and applied to the same Sense in the New. Our Saviour speaking of Regeneration, says to *Nicodemus*, *art thou a Master in Israel and knowest not these things?* *Job. iii. 10.* and he bids the *Jews* search the Scriptures of the Old Testament; for in them says he, *ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me,* *Job v. 39.* it was in them fore-told that a much clearer Revelation was to be made by the Gospel *Jer. xxxi. 31.* When our Saviour by his Resurrection gave a fuller Manifestation of a future Immortal State than could be given by any other Means, and brought *Life and Immortality to Light thro' the Gospel,* *2 Tim. i. 10.* Yet this it self was Typified in the Old Testament, by raising Dead Men to Life again; and the Translation of *Enoch* and *Elijah* into Heaven was for a Testimony and Assurance

urance of a Future State both of Body and Soul.

The Doctrin deliverd by *Moses* and the Prophets was as effectual a Caution and warning to Men, to keep them from *the place of Torments* as a Message from the Dead could have been, *Luke xvi. 31.* The Old Testament therefore is not deficient in any necessary Point of Salvation, but the Ceremonial Law was enjoyned, as a suitable Help and Expedient for the retaining those Truths which had been revealed before. Which was so well known, (x) *Origen. contra. Cels. lib. 2.* (*) that *Celsus* puts this as an Objection into the Mouth of the *Jews*, whom he brings in Arguing against the Christian Religion, that it taught them nothing but what they knew before, concerning the Resurrection of the Dead, and a future Judgment and a State of Rewards and Punishments in another World. And it cannot be denied that the *Apocryphal* as well as the *Canonical* Books teach these things.

The Honour and Authority of our Religion amongst Men depends very much upon a right Knowledge, and a due consideration of this Subject. And those who profess never so great Veneration for the New Testament, but have little esteem for any part of the Old, understand neither the one nor the other as they ought. They refer all along to each other, and must stand or fall together, for the one is but a Draught as it were, or Model of

of the other; all things being though obscurely, yet sufficiently taught in the Old Testament, which are fully and lively express'd in the New.

The Sum of all is this. The Faith in the *Messias* to come, and the Principles of Religion and Morality had been delivered down from the Beginning by *Adam* and *Noah* to their Posterity: And when *Moses* by God's Direction and Appointment gave Laws to the Children of *Israel*; the End and Design of these Laws was the preservation of this Faith and Practice amongst them. And this was effected by visible Objects and sensible Remembrances; the *Jewish* Dispensation was ordain'd in condescension to the Circumstances and Capacities of those Ages and that Nation, in such a manner as was most suitable to their Condition, and most Worthy of God; the rest of the World had wholly given up and abandoned themselves to Carnal Ordinances and Superstitions; and God, who produceth Good out of Evil, made use of this Fondness and Dotage of Mankind to the Preservation and Advancement of Truth and Holiness amongst Men. The Ceremonial Worship was no farther acceptable to God, and no otherwise design'd by Him, than to keep his People from running into Idolatry, to which they had so great a Proneness, to put them in mind of their own Sinfulness and Unworthiness, to preserve a Sense of Moral Duties, and of an inward

inward and spiritual Service; and to retain a Remembrance and Expectation of that *Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction*, which had been foretold, and was *in the Fulness of time* to be offered upon the Cross for the Sins of the World.

Thanks be to God, that we are instructed to worship him *in Spirit and in Truth*, without so many burthensome Ceremonies; but in those Ages of the World, nothing would have seem'd more strange and absurd than a Religion without some Pomp and Solemnity of Ceremonies: And God appointed for his People those which were innocent, to restrain them from all that were wicked and hurtful; He appointed the Sacrifices of Beasts to be Types of Christ's Sacrifice, and to withhold them from Humane Sacrifices, which were practis'd in other Nations, and enjoyn'd by other Religions; he commanded them to abstain from certain Meats, that they might not eat of Things offer'd to Idols, and these innocent Ceremonies he made useful and serviceable to the Great Ends of Faith and Righteousness. Nothing impracticable can be supposed to be prescrib'd by God to any People; nothing which is above their Abilities and present Attainments; and therefore would be of no use and benefit to them. But rather the Divine Goodness would condescend to their Infirmities, and comply with them in giving them such Laws, as may be agree-

agreeable and convenient for them in their present State, and may fit them for an higher and more excellent Dispensation. Whatsoever we may think of it now, nothing at the time, when the Law was given, would have look'd like Religion, that had been without abundance of Rites and Ceremonies. And herein the Wisdom of God appears, that to such a People and in such an Age, he gave a Law so admirably proper, and well contriv'd to preserve the Life and Substance of Religion under the Veil of Ceremonies, and to prepare them for the coming of his Son, when it was to be of no longer continuance. *The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.* Joh. i. 17. that is, the Grace of the Gospel, and the Truth and Reality or Substance of those Things, which were prefigur'd by the Law.

CHAP. XVI.

Of the Cessation of the Jewish Law.

OUR SAVIOUR was the GREAT PROPHET, who was to come, as *Moses* had foretold, and who was expected at the time of *His* coming; and it was likewise expected,

(x) *Mai-
m in. More
Nevoch.
Part 2. c.
36.*

expected, that that Prophet should work Miracles, as *Moses* had done, whom he was to be like, and he was to be a Lawgiver as *Moses* had been. The *Jews* had a general Expectation that the *Messiah* would manifest Himself by Miracles. *Joh. vii. 31.* Miracles had not been for a long time wrought in the *Jewish* Church, but it was receiv'd as a known and undoubted Truth, that they were to be reviv'd by Him. The (*) *Rabbins* still teach that the Gift of Prophecy is to return at the coming of the *Messiah*, according to God's express Promise: And the *Samaritans* themselves had this Notion of the *Messiah*, that he was to give full Instructions in all things relating to the Worship of God. *Joh. iv. 25.* And the Prophecies concerning the Birth, and Life, and Death of Christ, in all things necessary to prove him the true *Messiah*, were literally fulfilled in our Saviour, and those things which concern the Nature of His Kingdom, have been explain'd by Him and his Apostles. So that it being fully prov'd, that Jesus is the Christ by the Accomplishment in Him of the Antient Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, we ought to rest satisfied in his Authority, both for the Cessation of the Law of *Moses*, and for any Explication which He and his Apostles have given us of it. But this is not all, we are able to prove against the *Jews* from the Books of the Old Testament, that their Laws was to cease, when the *Messiah* was come.

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The Gospel is so far from containing any thing contrary to the Law, that it is the Fulfilling and Accomplishment of it. The Moral Precepts are improv'd and advanced, and the Ceremonial and Ritual Part was not properly abrogated and abolish'd, but it continued for as long time as it was design'd to do, and then expir'd of it self; it serv'd these Ends for which it was instituted, and afterwards must of consequence cease. The Ceremonial Worship therefore was permitted to the *Jews*, who became Converts to the Christian Faith, till the Destruction of their City and Temple, and then it was no longer practicable, but must of necessity cease; and the Cessation of the Law of *Moses*, when once it had its Period and Accomplishment, was as much the Will of the Legislator, at its first Institution, as its former Obligation could be.

The *Jewish* Law being Figurative and Typical, it follows, that it was to cease of course, when the Things prefigur'd and typified by it, should be brought to pass, that is, when the *Messiah* should come. For then the Types and Figures being fulfilled, could be of no longer use, nor the Law which enjoyn'd them, of any longer continuance, when once this Principal Reason of it ceased, and all other ends design'd by it, might be better attain'd without it, by the Worship of God *in Spirit and in Truth*. And this Law was so contriv'd, as not only to expire upon the fulfilling of it

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by the *Messiah*, but to become impracticable and impossible to be observ'd afterwards. I shall therefore prove the Cessation of the *Jewish* Law. I. Because the *Messiah* is come, in whom it was fulfilled. II. Because it was foretold by the Prophets, that the Law should cease upon the coming of the *Messiah*. III. Because after the coming of the *Messiah*, it was to become impracticable and impossible to be observ'd.

I. The *Messiah* is come, in whom the Law is fulfilled. As the coming of the *Messiah* was prefigur'd in the various Types and Ceremonies of the Law, which were therefore to receive their Accomplishment in him, so it is manifest that our Saviour is the *Messiah*, since the Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* have been all fulfill'd in Him. This has been already prov'd at large; and the Prophecies of *Zechariah* and *Malachy*, are so very plainly and undeniably fulfilled, that ^(a) some of the *Jews*, to evade them, have been forced to say, that the *Messiah* was born before the Destruction of the second Temple, tho' he doth not yet appear, but that he was seen at *Rome*, and has ever since lain conceal'd, as *Moses* did in the House of *Pharaoh*; and that the time will come, when he shall require the Dismission of the *Jews* from the *Pope*, as *Moses* demanded of *Pharaoh* the Dismission of the Children of *Israel*. But they say, that he defers the Manifestation of himself by reason of their Sins; and

(a) *Mat. Ser. de Mess.*

and upon this account have made many solemn Humiliations to implore his Help and hasten his coming; particularly *A. D. MDII.* they appointed a Publick Humiliation for Young and Old, Men, Women, and Children in all Parts of the World, for nigh a whole Year together. ^(b) *Trypho* did not deny that *Christ* was born, and might be somewhere unknown, but said, that he could not know himself to be *Christ*, nor work Miracles, till *Elias* had anointed him, and manifested him to the World. ^(x) Others have said, that there is to be a Third Temple, and during the time of the last, the *Messiah* will come, only because *Abraham* call'd the Place where the Temple stood, a Mountain, *Isaac* a Field, and *Jacob* an House. Some are of Opinion, that their Sins hinder his coming; some again think, that they are neither sinful enough, nor righteous enough: For, say they, he must come in a Generation altogether sinful, or altogether righteous.

(b) *Just. Martyr. Dialog.*

(x) *Mat. Ser. 16.*

The Prophecy of *Daniel's* Weeks is so punctually in all its Circumstances fulfilled, that not only ^(f) *Josephus* and the modern *Jews* apply it to the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*, but ⁽ⁱ⁾ some of the *Jews* when they could not deny the Computation to be true, and to agree exactly with the time of our Saviour's Birth, have even dared to say that *Daniel* himself was mistaken in the Account, others have confess'd that all the Terms of Time assigned

(f) *Joseph. Antiqu. Jud. lib. x. c. 12.*

Secundum Scriptum Judaei apud Limborch.

(i) *Lud. Viv. de ver. Fid. lib. 2.*

assigned for the coming of the *Messiah* are past, and that now their only hopes of deliverance and redemption are to be placed in their Repentance; and others lay a Curse upon such as presume to fix any particular Time for the coming of the *Messiah*. But (g) *Rabbi Nehumias* who lived fifty years before Christ, declared that the coming of the *Messiah* according to *Daniels* Prophecy could not be deferred beyond the space of fifty years longer, as *Grotius* has observed from the *Talmud*. Divers (c) of the *Jews* place the Passion of Christ sixty nine years before our common Account of the Year in which he truly suffered, others pretend another different Account without the least Reason for either pretence, but this shews how desperate a Cause they are engaged in, which forceth them upon such Artifices; for we have the express Testimony of *Tacitus*, that he suffered under *Pontius Pilate*. They Interpret *Isai. vii. 14.* where it is Prophefied that the *Messiah* was to be Born of a Virgin, contrary to the Sense of their Fore-Fathers; and therefore reject the Antient Translation of that Verse by the *Septuagint*, as (d) *Justin* Martyr urged against the *Jews* of his time. In *Origen's* time they expounded *Isai. liii.* of the Nation of the *Jews*, not of any particular Person, though as (e) *Origen* Argued in a Disputation with them, the Tenor of the whole Chapter is a plain confutation of this way of expounding it,

(g) *Grot. de Verit. lib. v. S. 14. & inter Sarrav. Epist.*

(c) *Bishop Pearson on the Creed Art. iv.*

(d) *Just. Mart. Dialogo.*

(e) *Origen. contr. Cels. lib. 1.*

it, and especially these words of the 8th Verse, for the Transgression of my People was he stricken. By the Person stricken cannot be understood the People, for whose Transgression he is said to have been stricken. (h) But they have found out another Evasion by pretending that there are to be two *Messiahs*, one the Son of *Joseph*, who is to be a suffering *Messiah*, and the other the Son of *David*, who is to enjoy all manner of Temporal Prosperity and Power.

So plain is it, that the Prophecies which the *Jews* themselves of old understood of Christ are fulfilled in our Saviour, and so unavoidably do they contradict all their own Antient Interpretations of Scripture, when they will not allow them to be fulfilled in him, For that they are fulfilled it is evident, and they can assign no other Person in whom they have been fulfilled.

II. It was fore-told by the Prophets, that the Law should cease upon the coming of the *Messiah*. It is evident from the Prophets that in some years after Christ, *Jerusalem* was to be no longer the seat of the *Jewish* Power and Government, nor the place of Worship. And their Prophecies suppose the Cessation of the *Jewish* Law upon a Two-fold Account, 1. From the Destruction of the Temple. 2. From the Dispersion of the People of the *Jews* and the Destruction of their City.

1. From the Destruction of the Temple.
The

(h) *Grot. ib. lib. v. S. 19. Bishop Pearson ib.*

(x) *Wagen-
seil. Annot.
ad excerpta
Gemara.
cap. 1. p.
236.*

The Prophet *Daniel* fore-told that after the *Messiah* was cut off the *Sanctuary* should be destroyed, and the *Sacrifice* and the *Oblation* should Cease, and that there should be Desolation even until the *Consummation*, *Dan. ix. 26, 27.* Since the *Sanctuary* is laid waste and desolate, and by this Prophecy is never to be Rebuilt, the *Temple* being the Place of all their *Worship* and *Solemnities*, that failing their whole *Worship* must fail with it. And whenever the *Jews* have attempted to Rebuild their *Temple*, they have been hindered from doing it, and particularly (as I have several times already observed) in the time of *Julian* the *Apostate*, by *Miraculous* and *dreadful Judgments*, related by *Ammianus Marcellinus* an *Heathen Historian*, who lived at that time, and by a (*) *Jewish Writer*. And when they have been permitted to Build them *Synagogues* and *Places of Worship* in all other *Parts of the World*, that *Place alone* has been denied them in which by their *Law* they were indispensably bound to *Worship*. All the *Males* were obliged to resort to *Jerusalem* to *Worship* thrice every year, and the *Place of their Worship* was more strictly enjoined than the time. For if any *Man* were upon a *Journey*, or *Unclean*, a second *Passover* was appointed for him, but it could be observed at no other *Place* but *Jerusalem*, upon any occasion whatsoever, *Num. ix. 10. Deutr. xvi. 5.* And therefore during the *Captivity at Babylon*, they did not

Cele-

Celebrate these Feasts of the *Passover* of *Pentecost*, and of *Tabernacles*; how could they Sing the *Lord's Song in a strange Land?* *Psal. Cxxxvii. 4.* And the *Destruction of the City and Temple* by the *Romans* at the time of the *Passover*, was a sign that they were no longer *God's Peculiar People*, nor under the *Protection of those Promises*, which by the *Law* were made to them, and had ever been fulfilled till the time of the *Promise* was expired. St. (i) *Chrystom* blames the *Jews* of his time for observing the *Law* in the *Countries* whither they were dispersed, which he proves to be contrary to *God's Commandment*, and to the *Practice of their Ancestors*: And the *Modern Jews* confess that their *Worship* is impracticable in their present *Condition*, they acknowledge that they ought to offer *Sacrifice* no where else but at the *Temple of Jerusalem*; the *Observation of the Passover* among them now is without *Sacrificing the Paschal Lamb*, and they observe the day of *Attonement* without the *Sacrifice of Expiation*.

2. The *Destruction of the City of Jerusalem*, and the final *Dispersion of the People of the whole Nation of the Jews* proves, that their *Law* is at an end. *Jacob* plainly foretold both the coming of the *Messiah*, and the end of the *Power and Authority of the Nation of the Jews* upon His coming. *The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law giver from between His feet until Shiloh come, and unto Him*

(i) *Chryf.
adv Jude-
os lib. 1.
Tom. 6.
Sav. Edit.*

(x) Exercit. 1.
Num. 5.

Him shall the gathering of the People be. Gen. xlix. 10. This Prophecy was by the antient Jews always understood of the *Messiah*, as is evident by the *Targums*; and it appears to be fulfill'd in our Saviour, both because the *Jewish* Government in His time was drawing towards its final Period, and because the People of all Nations have been gathered to Him, and have been made Profelytes to his Religion. The *Sceptre* and the *Law-giver*, that is, the Power of their Arms, and the Authority of their Laws was not so to depart, as to become extinct, till the *Messiah* came, which implies that soon after his coming, they were both to cease, as we see they have long since actually done. The Accomplishment of *Jacob's* Prophecy was gradual; *Herod* was of another Nation, but a Profelyte, and upon that account he might be stil'd a *Jew*; as (*) *If. Casaubon* has prov'd against *Baronius*.: And when he was made King of the *Jews*, this was as a Warning to awaken them to expect the full Accomplishment of this Prophecy, which was brought to pass in the final Destruction of their Government. The *Jewish* Government all along under all Changes was still denominated from *Judah*, tho' that Tribe was not always in Chief Power; and even under *Herod*, who was an *Idumean*, it had its Title from *Judah*; as the Roman Empire retain'd its old Denomination, when divers of the Emperours were not *Romans* by Birth.

But

But when the *Messiah* was come, the Sceptre was to depart from *Judah*, and there were no more to be any Law in force amongst that People, who had been so long known under that Denomination, which they receiv'd from him. And this Prophecy of *Jacob*, in which he foretels the Condition of the several Tribes, has a plain Reference to the Promised Land, and is to be understood of the *Jewish* Government in the Land of *Canaan*, for he there describes the Borders of it. From the time that they were in Possession of that Land, the People of the *Jews* never had lost all their Right and Title to it, before the coming of Christ, but still retain'd their Right, during their Abode in *Babylon*, and were assur'd that they should again be put in Possession after a Captivity of seventy Years; and in Token of this, *Jeremiah* purchased a Field of *Hanameel*, his Uncle's Son, and subscribed and sealed the Writings, and took Witnesses and paid down the Money publickly before all the *Jews* that sat in the Court of the Prison, and the Evidences were to be kept in an Earthen Vessel. For thus saith the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel, Houses, and Fields, and Vineyards shall be possess'd again in this Land. Jer. xxxii. 14. But when the time of *Jacob's* Prophecy was expir'd, and *Shiloh* was come, they were driven out, never to be restor'd again. The *Romans*, the most Generous of any People, dealt so hardly with no other Nation, as with the *Jews*.

Jews, who yet had to do with one of the most merciful Princes, that stands upon Record in History. If *Tiberius*, or *Caligula*, or *Nero* had destroyed them, it might have been ascrib'd to the Cruelty of their Temper; but when *Titus*, who endeavour'd to save them, was by their own Obstinacy forc'd upon their Destruction, after they had by their Dissentions made themselves a Prey to him, there was the visible Hand of God in it; as *Josephus* often confesses, and as *Titus* himself declar'd, when he beheld the Towers and Fortifications, after the City was taken. If they could have agreed either in their own Defence, or in any Terms of Submission to him, they would have been far from suffering in that Extremity. When *Pompey* and *Crassus* entred *Jerusalem*, the time of its Destruction was not yet come, but it was reserv'd to *Titus*, whose peculiar Character it was, that he oblig'd all Men, and who was stil'd the *Love and Delight of Mankind*, unwillingly to do that, which neither *Pompey* nor *Crassus* would do. It is well urg'd by a ^(k) Learned *Jew*, tho' he makes a wrong Inference from it. Did the same thing, says he, befall any other People? Did the *Romans* drive the *Germans*, the *Britains*, the *Gauls*, the *Spaniards*, the *Greeks*, or the *Asiatick* Nations into Captivity, and disperse them thro'out all Parts of the World? They rather endeavour'd to preserve them, that their several Countries might not want Inhabitants.

And

And tho' the *Jews* have been generally observ'd to have great Riches in the Nations where they live, they have never been able by any power or interest to get themselves Re-establish'd in their Country and Government, but have been disappointed as often as they have attempted it, tho' with never so much probability of success. So evident it is by the experience of so many Ages, that however it fares with particular persons of that Nation, yet they never are to be united again, as a Community, or Body of People to live under their ancient Laws, according to the Mosaical Constitution. They have no City, no Government, nor ever are to have any; and therefore those Laws can now no longer be in force, which suppose the continuance of their Government. Their Genealogies are lost, upon which the distinction of their Tribes and Families, and the Succession of their Priesthood did depend: So that they are without an Altar, without a Priest, without a Sacrifice, and without any possibility of knowing the Descent and Lineage of their *Messiah*, whom they expect to come; and by consequence cannot know him, if he should come, having no way to distinguish that Tribe and Family of which the Prophecies declare the *Messiah* was to be. In the *Babylonian* Captivity there were *Αρχμαλωτάρχαι*, who kept up Order and Government amongst them; and that besides was at the most but a suspension of their Power, it was

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no

(k) Secundum seriptum Fus dei apud Limbroch.

no utter extirpation of all Rule and Authority; their Genealogies were preserved, and the distinction of their Tribes and Families known; their deliverance out of that Captivity, with the time and manner of it, and the very Name of their Deliverer was foretold; *Isa* xlv. 28. *Jer.* xxv. 12. *Dan.* ix. 2. And in that Captivity they had Prophets to direct and support them under their affliction, and give them assurance of a Restoration, but now they do not so much as pretend to have any. The Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of the *Ægyptian* Bondage was likewise foretold, with the punctual time of it, *Gen.* xv. 13, 14. And in general, God declares that when at any time for their Sins they were led into Captivity, and dispersed among the Heathens, tho' they were driven unto the utmost part of Heaven, yet upon their Repentance he would *turn their Captivity, and have compassion upon them, and would return and gather them from all the Nations, whither he had scattered them,* *Deut.* xxx. 2, 3. *Neh.* i. 8, 9. And this Promise must have been in force, as long as their Law and Constitution lasted, and could have no limitation but the final and determined period of it. The time for the duration of the *Jewish* Law and Government being expired, all promises made to them as a distinct People and Nation, must be expired with it; whereas if their Law were still in force, the promise of their being restored to their Land and Government would undoubtedly

doubtedly before this time have been fulfilled to them. For, besides that their Sins at their return from their Captivity in *Babylon* were very great, it cannot be supposed, that for so many Ages their Sins should hinder that a Remnant at least should not be restored, if the *Jewish* Oeconomy had not received its final period in the destruction of their City and Nation. (1) *Redde statum Judææ, quem Christus inveniat, & alium contende venire.* This, which was a good Argument in *Tertullian's* time, is improved still in every Age since. For if the State of the *Jewish* Nation was not such then as their *Messiah* was to find at his coming, there is the less cause for them after so long time to hope that they shall ever be restored to such a Condition, as to have any reason to expect him.

III. After the coming of the *Messiah* the *Jewish* Law was to become impracticable, and impossible to be observ'd. For if the City and Temple were not destroy'd, the confinement of the *Jewish* Worship to one certain Place must necessarily imply an alteration in their Worship upon the coming of the *Messiah*, and the calling of the *Gentiles*; who could not all be supposed to assemble thrice every year at *Jerusalem*; and therefore the Prophets foretold, That *Jerusalem* should then be no longer the only place of God's Worship, but that Men should Worship him in any place of the World: 'Tis true, the Prophets often mention the re-

fort which should be made from all Nations to Jerusalem, and to the Temple, or the *Mountain of the Lord*. But then these are Mystical Expressions; for the City of Jerusalem, and the Temple, are used by the Prophets as Types of the Christian Church; and therefore Ezekiel

(m) Light-foot's Prospect of the Temple, ch. 2.

(m) describes the Temple larger than the whole City of Jerusalem, and the City in greater dimensions than all the Land of Canaan, to shew that we are not to understand these Expressions literally. A Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedeck, different from that of Aaron was Prophecied of, *Psal. cx. 4.* and a New Covenant different from that which was made with the Children of Israel upon their coming out of the Land of Ægypt, *Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.* And this Covenant was to extend to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews. *For from the rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering: for my Name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts, Malach. i. 11.*

If against all this it be alledged, That the Mosaical Law was to endure *for ever*, it ought to be considered what sense that expression bears in the Law it self. And that expression is there used to denote the continuance of any thing which was not designed for some particular occasion or season only, but was to last as long as the nature and general design of its Institution

tion would admit. The Servant whose Ear was bored, was to serve his Master *for ever*, *Exod. xxi. 6.* by which is to be understood, not all his Life, but only till the year of Jubilee; whereas he that had not his Ear bored, was to be set free in the seventh year, *ver. 2.* And even before the year of Jubilee, he whose Ear was bored, might be freed with his Master's Consent; (n) either by Manumission, or Redemption, and was at liberty upon the death of his Master, not being bound to serve his Son. *Their anointing shall surely be an everlasting Priesthood throughout their Generations, Exod. xl. 15.* which can be understood to extend no farther, than as long as their Genealogies were preserved, and the Tribe and Generations of the High-Priests could be distinguished. *I will abide in thy Tabernacle for ever, Ps. lxi. 4.* or, in other words, *all the days of my Life, Ps. xxvii. 4.* Samuel was brought by his Mother to abide before the Lord *for ever*; that is, during his Life, *1 Sam. i. 22.* And by parity of Reason those Statutes and Laws are said to be Established *for ever*, which were designed to be perpetual and standing Laws; not temporary, during their journeying in the Wilderne's only as others were, but to continue as long as the Constitution of the Government was to last; and in this sense the Jews themselves (o) have taken the word; and it is sufficiently explain'd *Deut. xii. 1. These are the Statutes and Judgments*

(n) Grot. ad loc.

(o) Id. de Veritat. Lib. 5. S. 7.

which ye shall observe to do in the Land, which the Lord God of thy Fathers giveth thee to possess it all the days that ye live upon the Earth; or as we read ver. 19. as long as thou livest upon thy earth; that is, their Law was obligatory to them as long as they had possession of the Land of Canaan, or retained any right to possess it by God's donation: But those Statutes and Judgments which were to be observed in the Land which the Lord had given them to possess, can no longer be of any obligation to them, when they are finally deprived of that Land.

The Ceremonial Law therefore by its Original Design and Institution being to continue in force but till the coming of Christ, he gave the accomplishment to it, and put a final period to its Obligation, Instituting his Gospel in its stead, which had been pre-figured by the Law, and foretold both by *Moses* and the Prophets.

C H A P. XVII.

Of Sinful Examples Recorded in the Scriptures.

AS some have endeavour'd to excuse their own Sins by alledging the Sinful Examples which we find mention'd in the Scriptures;
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so others, who are no less fond of imitating them, yet have from hence taken a pretence for Objections and Cavils. I shall therefore shew, that the bad Examples in some actions of Men whom we find in all other respects commended in the Scriptures, are far from being proposed for our imitation; but there is great reason why the Faults and Miscarriages of the best Men should be deliver'd down to us in the Scriptures for our Caution and Prevention, as well as upon other accounts.

I. Several passages of the Scriptures contain only Matter of Fact, and that very briefly express'd; and a bare Narrative of any Action, implies neither the Approbation nor the Censure of it, but only declares that such a thing was done, and in such a manner: but the Nature of the Fact it self, with the Circumstances of it; or some Command or Permission, or Prohibition in Scripture, must discover the goodness or lawfulness, or the wickedness of the Action. No Historian is supposed to approve of all which he relates; but he must report bad as well as good Deeds, who will do the part of a faithful Historian.

II. The Rules of Good and Evil are plainly delivered in the Scriptures, by which we are to judge of Actions; and we are to conform our Actions not to the Example of Men, but to the Law of God. We are forewarn'd to follow no Man's Example, when it is contrary to the Divine Law; and therefore it could not be necessary

cessary in the relating of every evil Action to set a mark of Infamy upon it, and a Caution against the imitation of it.

III. The Relation of the bad Actions of Good Men may be of great use and benefit, tho' we are not to follow, but avoid them; Because,

1. This shews the sincerity of the Pen-Men of the Scriptures, that they spare no person whatsoever, but relate the plain Matter of Fact, even tho' themselves be concern'd, when it is never so much to their disgrace; as in the Denial of *St. Peter*, and other instances.

2. By this we learn the Frailty of Humane Nature, and the necessary dependance that the best Men must have upon God for his Grace in the performing any good Action; *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, Jam. i. 17.*

3. We learn from hence, that God can bring Good out of Evil, and doth often over-rule even the worst Actions to the accomplishment of the best Ends, and *putteth no Trust in his Saints, Job xv. 15.*

There is a Remarkable Instance to this purpose in the Case of *Jacob* and *Esau*, when *Jacob* came by fraud and subtilty and depriv'd his Brother of the Blessing. (p) It was in Ancient times customary to offer that of which they were to eat, in Sacrifice, especially on so Solemn an Occasion, as a Father's giving his final Blessing; and as in this Case, foretelling
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(p) Casaub.
in Athenæ.
Lib. 1.
c. 11.

the Fate of his Posterity: And therefore when *Jacob* had by subtilty got the Blessing of his Father, *Isaac* could not recall it to conferr it upon *Esau*, because what was done in so solemn a manner had a Religious Obligation amounting to that of an Oath; and Oaths tho' obtain'd by fraud were Obligatory, as we learn from the Case of the *Gibeonites*, he had *blessed Jacob before the Lord*; and the Prediction that *the Elder should serve the Younger, Gen. xxv. 23.* with *Esau's* despising and selling his Birth-right might now probably come into *Isaac's* Mind; whereupon, tho' he did not approve of the fraud by which the Blessing was obtain'd, yet he knew it to be irrevocable, and that the Divine Purpose and Prediction would be accomplish'd thereby; and what he had by a Prophetick Spirit conferr'd, it was not in his power to recall. The Relation therefore of this Matter doth not justify *Jacob's* behaviour in it, but manifests the over-ruling Providence of God, to make any Means whatsoever instrumental to his gracious Ends, which can never be disappointed by any Actions of Men: for if they depended upon humane Actions, these would often fail them; the best Men being subject to so much frailty and sin.

4. Tho' God of his Mercy doth accept of the imperfect Services of the Righteous, forgiving upon their habitual Repentance the Sins and Frailties which are mix'd with the best Actions; and pardoning the worst Actions likewise

likewise after a particular Repentance and Amendment of Life: yet these stand upon Record for the glory of God's grace in their Repentance and Forgiveness, and for a memorial and warning to future Ages; that Men may neither presume upon their own Righteousness, nor despair of God's Mercy. But because they are pardon'd, they are not always censur'd. And I think the ill Actions of Good Men are seldom or never mention'd with a mark of God's displeasure, unless the Series of the History require it; and then the reproof is mention'd, which pass'd at the time of the Commission of them; as in the Case of *David*, of *Hezekiah*, and *St. Peter*. But where no such Censure was pass'd at the time of the Action, the Action it self is barely related, and nothing further said of it; because the Crime being forgiven, God forbears to shew any further displeasure against it; such is his Mercy to Repenting Sinners. And there could be no necessity, as I have observ'd, for any Censure upon the account of others, who may know by the plain Rule of God's word what Actions are sinful, tho' they are not always styl'd so in relating the Commission of them.

CHAP.

C H A P. XVIII.

Of the Imprecations in the Psalms, and other Books of the Old Testament.

ONE of the greatest Excellencies of the Christian Religion is the Universal Charity which it enjoyns; and we shall find that Charity was likewise the Doctrine of the Old Testament, and that there is nothing in the Book of *Psalms*, or any other part of the Old Testament, contrary to this Doctrine; which will appear, if we consider the peculiar Reasons for those expressions, which may seem to imply any thing contrary to it.

I. Many of those Expressions are used in reference to the Nations, upon whom after signal Acts of Mercy and Forbearance on his part, and repeated provocations on theirs, God had commanded the *Israelites* to execute his Judgments; and the Sins of the People of *Israel* were the cause that this was not accomplish'd: and therefore it was lawfull for them to pray that they might have grace to repent, and that their Sins might be no hindrance to them in the fulfilling his will; but that God would enable them *to execute vengeance upon the Heathen*, *Pf. cxlix. 7.* And it was lawful likewise to pray against all the other Enemies of God, that he would abase their Pride, and make them

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to know themselves to be but Men, Ps. ix. 20. lxxiv. 22, 23. cxxxix. 21, 22.

II. *David* being King, had the Sword of Justice committed to him, he was *the Minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that did evil*; and therefore when his Rebellious Subjects were too strong for him, as in the Rebellion of *Absalom*, he might make his Appeal to God, and beseech him to take the matter into his own hand. If he might punish his Subjects, he might pray to God that he would enable him to do it. And in Foreign Wars, if he might kill his Enemies, he might pray for Victory and Success over them.

III. It is lawful to pray that publick and notorious Malefactors may be punish'd, for it is lawful to discover them, and bring them to punishment; and it must needs be lawful to pray that that may be done, which it is lawful for us to do. It is lawful to seek redress of private Injuries, and therefore it is lawful to pray that they may be redress'd; for we may pray for success upon any honest undertaking. If this be done out of a love to Justice, and a necessary care of our own preservation; not out of malice, and a thirst after Revenge, but with the most favourable construction that the worst Actions are capable of, and with hearty Prayers to God for his Blessing upon the Offender; in giving him the grace of Repentance, and granting him whatsoever happiness in this World

World may be consistent with the honour of God, and Justice towards other Men, and the Salvation of his own Soul.

IV. God was the peculiar Law-giver, and Political Governour of the *Jews*; and Temporal Rewards and Punishments were the Sanction of the Laws which he had given them. For the *Mosaical* Law is called *the ministration of Death*, and *the Ministration of Condemnation*, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. because the promises of the Law, as *such*, belong'd only to this Life, and a Curse was denounc'd against every one, that *continu'd not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10, 11. God had expressly threatned to inflict Punishment in this Life, for the transgression of those Laws; and therefore to pray to God that his Judgments might overtake Evil-doers, was no more than it is in other Governments, to prosecute Offenders before the Magistrate, they appealed to God to put his Laws in force against them, and not to suffer the wicked to go unpunish'd in contempt of those Laws, which he had appointed, and under that dispensation which was establish'd upon Temporal Rewards and Punishments. They were not allow'd to indulge their anger and desire of Revenge, yet they might pray that God would avenge himself of his Enemies, and rescue his Laws from that contempt which they must lie under from wicked Men, if they did not feel those punishments which the Laws of God threatned them withall. But

But under the Gospel the Case is different; for now we are not to expect that Temporal Rewards and Punishments should constantly follow upon the performance or transgression of our Duty; but both of them may be commonly reserved to a future State. A Christian may not pray for Judgments upon his Enemies, because God has not so peremptorily declared by the Gospel, that he will inflict his Punishments in this Life, as he had done by the Law, and we have our Saviour's Command and Example to pray for their Repentance, that they be not punished in the next. But a Christian may right himself in due course of Law; and in order to that, may Petition the Judge without any breach of Charity; and this was all that the Jews did, when they pray'd God to execute his own Laws, by inflicting such Punishments as he had threatned to inflict upon the Transgressors of them in this Life: they invoked and appealed to God as their Political Judge and Sovereign, and pray'd Judgment against Offenders.

V. Those which seem Imprecations, are oftentimes Predictions or Denunciations of Judgments to come upon Sinners; as we may learn from *Acts* 1. 20. And it can be no uncharitableness to foretell or denounce God's Judgments against Sinners, but rather an effect of Charity towards them for their Repentance, and Amendment.

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Most of those places of Scripture may as properly be rendred by way of prediction in the Future Tense; and when they cannot, they may be look'd upon as denunciations of God's Wrath. For Prophets were sometimes employ'd to execute the Divine Judgments, as we see in *Elijah*, *2 Kings* i. 9, 10. and as they sometimes executed God's Judgments, so they at other times denounced them; and this had nothing of uncharitableness in it, but is fully agreeable with the Gospel it self. For thus we read that *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were punished with present death by *St. Peter*, *Acts* v. But if *St. Peter* had denounced Death without inflicting it immediately upon them, this had been less. And *St. Paul* prays that the Lord would reward *Alexander the Copper-Smith* according to his works, who had done him much evil, *2 Tim.* iv. 14. which was no uncharitable imprecation, but a leaving him to God's Judgment, and a denunciation of punishment to befall him without Repentance; it was an Authoritative Act, and in consequence of that excommunication which the Apostle had inflicted upon him, *1 Tim.* i. 20. And when God had inspired and empower'd Men to denounce Judgments, this was no more against Charity, than the inflicting of them would have been, or than Excommunication it self is. If Magistrates are empower'd in the King's Name to give Sentence, and to inflict Punishments, certainly Men may be so empower'd and au-

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thoriz'd by God himself, and may act or speak accordingly, without breach of Charity.

VI. The Expressions *Pf. lxxix.* and *cix.* are to be understood concerning *Judas*, as we find them applied, *Acts i.* and all other Expressions of the same nature may be understood either of him, or of some others like him, whom the *Psalmist* by inspiration might know to be hardned in Sin, past Repentance, and therefore might pray that God would rather cut them off, than suffer them to do more mischief in this World, and increase the number of their Iniquities here, and of their Miseries in the World to come.

VII. Lastly, This Supposition is tacitly employ'd in Imprecations, if they will persist in their Sins, if they will not repent; and the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures might in some Cases know by Revelation, that Judgments were the only means to reclaim those Men against whom they pray'd, and then it was the greatest Charity to pray that God would be pleas'd to make use of that Remedy, which alone was left for their Amendment; as *Psal. lxxxiii. 15, 16. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame: that they may seek thy Name, O Lord.*

There is nothing therefore inconsistent with the Doctrine of Charity, and the Love of our Neighbour in those places of Scripture, which have been liable to the mistakes of unwary Men.

Men. For either they are Prayers to God to enable the *Israelites* to do what he had appointed, as in the destruction of the *Canaanites*, whom God was pleas'd for wise and great Reasons to punish by the Sword of the Children of *Israel*, rather than by Pestilence, or any other Judgment. Or they are Prayers to God to assist them in the doing what both Justice and Charity will allow to be done, either by Persons in Authority, as King *David*, or even by private Men; as in the prosecution of Offenders, and bringing them to condign punishment; and this may be without any degree of Malice, or the least breach of Charity; since Punishment it self may be not only an act of Justice but of Charity likewise towards divers Men. Or these Expressions may be Appeals to God as the Political Governour and Legislator of the *Jews*: Or they are Predictions or Denunciations of God's wrath against Sinners. And they may be directed against impenitent obstinate Men hardned in their Wickedness. Or, lastly, they may be only Prayers to God, that he would inflict such Punishments upon Men, as may bring them to Repentance.

And tho' the *Jews* in latter Ages perverted some passages of their Law to serve their own Pride and Revenge; yet, as it is evident by many instances, never any Law but that of Christ oblig'd Men to more Humanity towards Strangers, or more Charity towards Enemies. They were certainly to Covet no Man's House

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or Wife, and therefore the word *Neighbour* is not to be limited to signify only an *Israelite* or a *Profelyte*, but is to be understood of any Man whatsoever, *Exod. xx. 17. Thou shalt love him (the Stranger) as thy self. Lev. xix. 34.* The *Ægyptians* are stiled the Neighbours of the *Israelites*, *Exod. xi. 2.* And *Pf. xv. 2, 3.* where acts of common Justice towards Neighbours are spoken of; by *Neighbour* must necessarily be understood any person, for to all Men Justice is due. Not only Justice but Charity was enjoynd towards Enemies. *If thine Enemy be hungry give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee, Prov. xxv. 21, 22.* which words so fully express our Duty of Christian Charity, that *St. Paul* could find none fitter to describe it by, *Rom. xii. 20.* and *Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.* *If thou meet thine Enemies Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burthen, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.* And in divers other places of the Old Testament, Charity towards Enemies is highly recommended, and earnestly inculcated, *Job xxxi. 29. Prov. xx. 22. xxiv. 29. Malach. ii. 10. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self,* we read, *Lev. xix. 18.* but *thou shalt hate thine Enemy,* is no where to be found in the Old Testament; and therefore *Matt. v. 43.* it is to be taken as a false

false gloss of the Interpreters of the Law, which our Saviour rejects; unless it be to be meant, as *Grotius* understands it, of that enmity which the *Jews* were to shew in all acts of Hostility towards the seven Nations of *Canaan*, and the *Amalekites*, *Exod. xvii. 16. xxxiv. 11. Deut. vii. 1. xxv. 19.* yet these very Nations were not utterly excluded from becoming *Profelites*; and to me it seems very remarkable, that tho' the Children of *Israel* had receiv'd such hard and cruel usage in *Ægypt*, which is so often mention'd in the Law of *Moses*, they were nevertheless by the same Law commanded not to abhor an *Ægyptian*, but to admit the Children of *Ægyptian* Parents into the Congregation of the Lord in the third Generation. *Thou shalt not abhor an Ægyptian, because thou wast a Stranger in his Land, Deut. xxiii. 7.* Thou shalt not abhor him, that is, thou shalt not revenge upon him the injuries done thee, but shalt relieve him in time of distress; which (q) Charity the *Jews* ever held themselves oblig'd to extend to the *Gentiles*; and there is reason to suspect that they have been wrong'd in the reports of their uncharitableness to all of other Nations; but any thing is easily believ'd of a hated and despis'd People. And I am not to vindicate their Practice, but their Law. (r) *Philo Judæus* has an excellent Treatise, in which he discourseth at large upon this Subject, and shews to how great Humanity and Charity the *Jews* were oblig'd by the Law of *Moses*.

(q) Lightf.
Hebr. &
Talmud.
Exercit. on
Matt. vi. 2.

(r) Philo
Jud. præf.
φιλανθρωπίας
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C H A P. XIX.

Of the Texts of the Old Testament cited in the New.

TH^O' the Apostles having prov'd their Divine Commission by so many and so undeniable Miracles had an infallible Authority to interpret and apply the Texts of the Old Testament in confirmation of the Gospel; yet it is not to be doubted, but that the Citations, which seem to have most difficulty in them, are such as that the *Jews* of that time, against whom they were urged, could not but acknowledge that the Apostles gave the true Exposition of them, tho' they deny'd that they were truly apply'd to our Saviour, and his Gospel. For unless the Apostles had either made out their Citations from the Old Testament by Maxims and Principles then known and receiv'd among the *Jews*, or had alledg'd them in such a sense, as was then generally acknowledg'd, it had been to no purpose to alledge them at all against them.

It is known likewise and observable upon this occasion, that after the Captivity in *Babylon*, tho' the Bible was read in the Synagogues in the Original Hebrew, yet it was also interpreted into the vulgar Language, and the Interpreter did not always Translate the Text verbatim, but often gave the sense of it in different words, and with some latitude, to render

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it the more intelligible. This way of Interpretation was at length improv'd into a *Chaldee* Paraphrase, containing with the Text a short explication of it according to the sense of the most Learned among the *Jews*, tho' there must be supposed to have been many Notions current among them, which would not be brought within the compass of that Exposition. The Writers therefore of the New Testament might sometimes give such an Interpretation of the Texts of the Old Testament, as was as well, or better known among them for whom they wrote, than the *Greek* or *Hebrew* Text was; or they might take upon themselves the liberty of Interpreters, the better to explain the Texts alledged, and enforce their Arguments.

Thus for instance, *St. Stephen*, *Acts* vii. would never have produc'd any thing out of the Old Testament before the *Sanhedrim*; nor would *St. Luke* have Recorded it soon after, if it had been capable of any disproof or confutation, whatever difficulties at this distance of time there may appear to us to be in it. And so in all other Cases, we may depend upon it, that the Apostles and other Disciples, who had such demonstrative Evidence for the conviction of Unbelievers by a constant power of Miracles, would never make use of any Arguments to the *Jews* from the Old Testament, but such as they well knew their Adversaries could never be able to disprove or deny. For there were then certain

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Methods of Interpretation, as we learn from (s) *Josephus*, which are now lost, and they disputed from acknowledg'd Maxims and Rules: the only difference and matter of dispute was in the application of them to their particular case; however our ignorance of things, then generally known, may now make it difficult to reconcile some Texts of the New Testament with those of the Old, from whence they were cited.

(t) *Simon* (t) in his Critical History, has a remarkable Passage upon this Subject. "The Book, says he, where the most of that sort of Citations are found, is the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, where we find nothing else but passages of the Old Testament explain'd in a manner that is altogether Allegorical, and foreign to the Letter; which has also given an occasion to some Writers to suspect, that St. Paul was not the Author. But it seems on the contrary, that if we reflect upon the Pharisees Method in their expounding Scripture, it cannot be attributed to any other than to that holy Apostle, who having studied in Jerusalem under the Doctor Gamaliel, did penetrate into all the most refined points of their secret and mystical Interpretations of the Bible. And indeed after I had recommended the reading of this Epistle to a Jew, who was well read in his own ancient Authors, he having perused it, freely declar'd, that it must needs have been writ-

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" ten by some great (u) *Mekubal* of his own Nation. And he was so far from telling me that St. Paul had wrested the true sense of Scripture with his Allegories at pleasure, that he extolled his profound Skill in the sublime sense of the Bible, and always return'd to his great *Mekubal*, of whom he never spake but with admiration.

Hoc in omnibus scripturis sanctis observandum est Apostolos & Apostolicos viros in ponendis Testimoniis de veteri Testamento, non verba considerare, sed sensum, nec eadem Sermonum culcare vestigia, dummodo à sententiis non recedant, Hieron. in Amos. c. v.

Ex quo perspicuum est Apostolos & Evangelistas, & ipsum Dominum salvatorem—ex Hebræo transferre quod legerint, non curantes de syllabis punctisq; verborum, dummodo sententiarum veritas transferatur, Id. in Malach. c. iii.

C H A P. XX.

Of the Incarnation and Death of the Son of God.

THIS is that Article of our Faith, which was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. and has ever been most liable to the Objections of In-

fidels: and therefore I shall take the more care to give the clearest and fullest account I can of it.

I. I shall here consider the necessity of the Incarnation of the Son of God, for the satisfaction of the Justice, and the vindication of the honour of God.

II. Tho' it should be suppos'd, that God could have pardon'd the Sins of Men upon any other terms, than the death and satisfaction of his own Son in our Flesh; I hope fully to prove, that this is so far from being unworthy of God, that no other way of our Reconciliation with him (as far as we are able to apprehend) could have been so becoming the Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

1. There seems to have been a necessity for the Incarnation of the Son of God, for the satisfaction of God's Justice, and the vindication of his Honour. For God is Infinite Justice as well as Infinite Mercy; and Infinite Justice must punish Offenders, unless full satisfaction be made for the Offence; because Infinite Justice must demand to the utmost extent of Justice, and must require whatsoever can in Justice be demanded. But Infinite Mercy found out a Means to satisfy this Infinite Justice; which Satisfaction could be made only by the Obedience and by the Death of the Son of God, who by his *Obedience unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*, vindicated the Honour of God, by performing in our Nature a perfect and absolute

lute Obedience to all that ever God required of Mankind, and by suffering to the utmost of all that the Sins of the whole World deserv'd. It is for the Honour of God, that his Laws should be exactly observ'd, and observ'd by one who is of that very Nature, for which they were ordain'd; and that Satisfaction should be made in the same Nature for the Sins of it: Christ therefore taking our Nature upon him paid down *the uttermost Farthing*, which in strictness of Justice must have been demanded, but which could never have been paid by any Created Being, for the Sins of the whole World: And he *fulfill'd all Righteousness* in Obedience to the Divine Laws, which otherwise could never have been fully obey'd. And as far as God's Justice and Honour was concern'd to see his Laws obey'd, and to demand satisfaction for the breach of them; so far the Incarnation of the Son of God must be necessary, because these things could be perform'd by no Creature.

2. Tho' it should be suppos'd that God could have pardon'd the Sins of Men upon other Terms than the death and satisfaction of his own Son in our flesh, yet the Incarnation and Death of his Son is so far from implying any thing unworthy of God, that no other way of our Reconciliation with him (as far as we can apprehend) could so much have become the Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

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First, There is nothing in this whole Dispensation unworthy of God. Here I am to consider that which was the great prejudice taken against the Christian Religion at its first Propagation, and is still the great Objection of the Enemies of the Gospel of Christ, and of their own Salvation. They are apt to represent it to themselves as an unnecessary thing, and unworthy of God, that he should send his only begotten Son into the World for the Redemption of Mankind; they imagine that the Infinite Wisdom of God could have found out other Methods of Salvation for us, and that this would never have been made use of, if there could have been any other.

It might be enough in Answer to such Objections, to say with the Apostle; *nay, but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the Person saved, say unto him that saved him, why hast thou saved me thus?* will we not be contented to be saved, unless we can be fully certified in all the Reasons and Methods of our Salvation? May not God bring to pass our Redemption in such a way as he shall see fitting, or shall we question his Wisdom, if his Mercy be so much greater than we can comprehend? How infinite is his Mercy, and how monstrous our ingratitude, if his goodness be made an objection against the truth of his word, and be alledg'd as an Argument for our Unbelief? *What if God willing to shew the heinousness of Sin, and to make known the riches*

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of his Mercy, chose this way for the Redemption of the World? What if many Reasons may be given why this Method was the most proper and expedient; and what if there might be infinitely greater and better Reasons for it, than all the wisdom of Man can conceive?

But tho' the Revealed will and Counsel of God ought to silence all Disputes in this as well as in all other Cases; yet I think this Objection is capable of a very plain and direct Answer. For whatever weight there may seem to be in it, it is all grounded upon a Mistake, and upon a wrong Notion of the Union between the Divine and the Humane Nature of Christ. For if the Godhead be not so united to the Manhood as to suffer with it, there is no imaginable Reason why its Union with the Manhood should be supposed to be unworthy of God. I shall therefore

1. Shew the unreasonableness of this Supposition, that the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ should cause the Godhead to suffer with the Manhood.

2. I will prove that the Humiliation of the Son of God in assuming our Nature, may be accounted for without supposing that the Godhead suffer'd.

3. That the satisfaction of Christ by dying for our Sins may be explain'd without it.

I. The unreasonableness of this supposition, that the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ should cause the Godhead to suffer

suffer with the Manhood. This Objection supposes the Godhead to be so united to the Manhood in the Person of our Saviour, as that the Divine Nature must really and properly partake in all the Sufferings which befall his Person. It supposes, that Christ, as God, suffer'd the Miseries of Humane Life, and at last underwent Death upon the Cross; which is so far from being the Doctrine of the Gospel, that it is no better than Heresie and Blasphemy, and has always been rejected and condemned as such by the Catholick Church. That the Union of the Godhead with the Manhood, should render the Godhead capable of Sufferings, as the Soul by being united to the Body becomes sensible of its pains, is indeed a thing not only unworthy of God, but impossible to conceive. The Immortal and ever-blessed God can be subject to nothing of passion or frailty. The Godhead is incapable of any imperfection, and therefore incapable of receiving any impressions of Sufferings from the Humane Nature, as the Soul doth from the Body of Man. So that tho' the Union between the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ be fitly explain'd by that between the Soul and the Body in Man, yet the manner of acting is very different. For Finite Beings can mutually act and be acted upon by each other in their several actions and passions; but the Divine Nature of Christ being impassible, could suffer nothing by all that was inflicted on the
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Humane, but remain'd infinitely Happy and Glorious under all the Torments and Agonies endur'd by our Saviour both in his Soul and Body.

As God is pleas'd to aid and assist and support innocent and good Men in their sufferings, and to direct and conduct them thro' the course of their Lives: So God was not only present with the Humane Nature of Christ, but was so united to it, as to become one Person with it; which, since the Godhead could suffer nothing from it, is no more unworthy of God, than if he had only guided him with his Spirit, as he did the Prophets without any personal Union. There is no inconvenience or absurdity in believing that God should by the most intimate and personal Union become united to a Man, who did weep, and bleed, and die. For as God by this Union did not change the Nature he had assumed, or prevent the Sufferings of it, so he did not partake in them. No Man can deny (upon Principles of Philosophy, but that it is very reasonable to believe, that God may afford a more peculiar presence to one Man than to another, and that this Man may yet be subject to Afflictions; and therefore the Son of God might become united to the Soul and Body of Christ in as intimate a manner as the Soul and Body are united to each other in us; and yet this union of the Divine Nature might not preserve the Humane from the Sufferings incident to the
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rest of Mankind, but must leave it to submit to them, tho' they were never so grievous, when this was the very End and Design of the Union.

It was not below the Majesty of God to be Personally united to a most Innocent, and Sinless and Holy Man, tho' he was a Suffering and Afflicted Man; and it is not the Personal Union, as some are apt to conceive, which could be any diminution to God's Glory, but their own error and mistake, in what they surmise would be the consequence of such an Union.

II. The Humiliation of the Son of God in assuming our Nature may be accounted for, without supposing that the Godhead suffer'd. It was the greatest condescension and humiliation in the Son of God to take upon him our Nature: For it is a gracious and merciful condescension for him to take care of us by his Providence. *God humbled himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in the Earth*, Ps. cxiii. 6. But some times and in some places he is in a more peculiar manner present upon Earth, and that is an extraordinary condescension; tho' he is always the same in himself, and never the less present or the less happy in Heaven. But it was the most wonderful condescension in God to unite himself to our Humane Nature, and to become one Person with it, and so to die for us: tho' his Divine Nature did not and could not suffer, but only the Humane Nature

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to which it is united. He was *not ashamed to call Men his Brethren*, and *in all things to be made like unto his Brethren*, Hebr. ii. 11, 17. but vouchsafed to assume our Nature in its lowest Condition, and to be so strictly and personally united to the most afflicted of all the Sons of Men, as to ascribe all his Sufferings to himself, for the benefit of all Mankind.

It is the Infinite Mercy of God to vouchsafe us the comfort of his presence in any way or measure: but it is the most astonishing and adorable act of his goodness, that he would be pleas'd so far to condescend, as to take our very Nature upon him, that he might be born, and might die for our sakes. And that which magnifies his mercy and goodness in the highest measure, is certainly most worthy of the good and merciful God.

III. The satisfaction of Christ by dying for our Sins, may be explain'd without supposing that the Godhead suffer'd. The Christian Faith is, *That as the Reasonable Soul and Flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ*; and that this Person consisting both of God and Man united, suffer'd for our Salvation: But that all the Sufferings were inflicted on the Humane Nature, and terminated in it. But by vertue of the Personal Union of his Divine with his Humane Nature, all Christ's Sufferings receiv'd an infinite value and merit, and became entituled and ascrib'd to God himself, because

because they were undergone by that Person, who is God as well as Man, tho' they were not undergone by him in his Divine, but only in his Humane Nature.

Thus God is said to have *purchas'd his Church with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. For Actions and Passions in any person are Personal, and are attributed to the whole person; and sometimes those Actions and Passions, which can be perform'd in one of those Natures only, which constitute a person, are yet attributed to the other Nature, which is incapable of them otherwise than by that relation which results from the union of both Natures; whereby all things that befall the person, may be affirmed of it as such, and therefore have respect to both the Natures, of which it consists, and may be apply'd to it, under the denomination of either of them. *All the Souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy Souls*, Exod. i. 5. *If a Soul touch any unclean thing*, Lev. v. 2. *And the Soul that eateth of it, shall bear his Iniquity*, Lev. vii. 18, 20. In these, and many other places of Scripture, Actions and Passions peculiar to the Body, are, by reason of the union of the Soul and Body, attributed to the Soul. Nay, both in the *Hebrew* and the *Greek* Text the Soul is sometimes put for the Body, even of a dead Man, *Lev. xxi. 11. xxii. 4.* in which sense (x) Bishop Pearson explains *Acts ii. 27. Ps. xvi. 10.*

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And in other places the Body or Flesh is often taken for the whole Man, and that is attributed to it, which the Flesh is of it self incapable of. The Flesh distinctly considered, and apart from the Soul can neither Sin, nor Pray, nor Understand, nor Worship, nor partake of the Spirit, nor be Justified; and yet all these things are ascribed to the Flesh, without any mention made of the Soul. *All Flesh had corrupted his way upon the Earth*, Gen. vi. 12. *O thou that hearest Prayer, unto thee shall all Flesh come*, Ps. lxxv. 2. *And all Flesh shall know, that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob*, Isa. xlix. 26. *All Flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord*, Isa. lxvi. 23. *And all Flesh shall see the Salvation of God*, Luke iii. 6. *I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Flesh*, Acts ii. 17. *Joel ii. 28. By the works of the Law shall no Flesh be justified*, Galat. ii. 16. And we say in our own Language, *any Body thinks, or any Body understands*; tho' we all know, it is the Soul, and not the Body, which thinks, and understands. It is very usual in other Books, and very agreeable to the stile of Scripture, and to the common speech and sense of Men, for those Actions of a Person to be attributed to one of the united Natures, which could be perform'd only in the other. And the Union between the Godhead and the Manhood being like that, which is between the Soul and the Body, the Son of God is said to have *Suf-*

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ferred, and the Son of Man to have come down from Heaven; not that the Godhead Suffered, or that the Humane Nature of Christ was in Heaven before his Incarnation, but according to the usual stile of Scripture, the Union between the Divine and Humane Natures entitles the Person consisting of them both, under the denomination of either Nature, to that which was done in the other, tho' as the Humane Nature did not partake of the perfections of the Divine; so neither did the Divine Nature partake of the sufferings of the Humane. But both Natures being personally united, the person is sometimes denoted by one, and sometimes by the other Nature.

All the Objections against the Incarnation of the Son of God proceed upon the like mistake with theirs, who are apt to imagine that it is unworthy of God to be every where, and in all places, to behold and be present at the worst of Actions; as if the Sun's brightness would not be the more resplendent and glorious, if it could penetrate into the obscurest corners and recesses of the Earth; or as if his Rays could be sullied and defiled by the foulness of any Object which they shine upon. And if it be no diminution to God's Infinite Glory and Majesty to be Omnipresent, it can be none to be more nearly and even Personally united to some part of the Creation; and therefore it cannot be unworthy of God to be so united to the Humane Nature, to manifest his

his love and favour, and extend his goodness to Mankind. As God is every where present, so he is in a more especial manner present in some places than in others by the acts of his Power, or of his Grace and Favour; and he has vouchsafed a more especial presence to some Persons than to others; and thus he was present with his Prophets, who were sent to prepare for and foretell Christ's coming. But he was personally united to the Humane Nature of Christ. And this is the highest Honour and Advancement to our Nature, for God thus to assume it; but it can be no diminution to the Divine Majesty, because God continues as he was from all Eternity, without any alteration; only by his personal Presence and Union with our Humane Nature, he causes all the performances and sufferings of it to be meritorious, for the Salvation of Mankind.

The Son of God did not so come down from Heaven as to be no longer there, but to forsake his Father's Kingdom: He still continued in Heaven in the same Bliss and Glory, that he enjoy'd with his Father from all Eternity, tho' he so manifested himself to the World, as to come and abide in it by assuming our Humane Nature. Our Saviour tells *Nicodemus*, Joh. iii. 13. *No Man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* He who fills Heaven and Earth with his presence, was still in Heaven as much as ever, with respect

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to his Godhead, tho' he made a more peculiar residence than he had before done on Earth, by dwelling in our Nature here. The Son of God who is at all times every where present, is yet in a peculiar manner present, where ever he is pleas'd to manifest himself by peculiar acts of his goodness and power, as he was pleas'd to do in a most stupendous manner in that Flesh which he took upon him of the Blessed Virgin. And it cannot be thought inconsistent with the Majesty of God to actuate the Humane Nature, and to be joyned in the most strict and vital union with it, supposing God only to act upon it, and not to be acted upon by it, nor to suffer the miseries and feel the pains which the Humane Nature endures (which would be Blasphemy to assert of the Divine Nature of Christ) but to be in Heaven still in his full Power and Majesty.

But some Man will say, how is this Union between the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ made, or wherein doth it consist? To whom we may reply, as our Saviour sometimes did to the Scribes and Pharisees, by asking another Question, and enquiring, how the Body and Soul in Man are united? or how God is present in all places? and how in him we live, and move, and have our Being? And if no Man can tell how these things are, tho' no Man can deny the truth and reality of them, then it is not to be expected, that we should be able to tell how the union between the Di-

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vine and the Humane Nature in Christ is made, or in what it consists. We must acknowledge it a Mystery, which it is above any Man's capacity to explain; but that there is such an union, we learn from the Scriptures, and thither we appeal for the truth of it. And the putting such Questions, argues either a great mind to cavil, or great inconsideration, and shortness of thought. For what Man is there pretending to Reason and Argument, of so little observation, as not to take notice, that of all the things which we daily see and perceive to be in the World, the nature and manner of existence of very few or rather of none of them is fully understood by us? It is sufficient for us to know, that great Reasons may be given for this dispensation of the Son of God incarnate, and that no Material Objection can be framed against it.

Secondly, No other way (as far as we can apprehend) could have been so proper and expedient, as the Incarnation of the Son of God, to procure the Salvation of Mankind, and therefore none could so well become the Divine Wisdom and Goodness. The proof of this must depend upon the Reasons for Christ's coming into the World, and they are all comprehended in this one thing, the abolishing or taking away of Sin. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our Sins, and in him is no Sin, 1 Joh. iii. 5. We are to consider then, that the manifestation of Christ in the Flesh,

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did more powerfully and effectually take away Sin, than any other way or means of Salvation could have done.

I. The Doctrine and Preaching of the Son of God had more Power and Authority with it than the Preaching and Doctrine of a Man or Angel could have had. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds, Hebr. i. 1, 2. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3. This being the last Message which God had resolv'd to send to Mankind, a Person of the greatest Dignity and Authority was to bring it: But last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son, Matt. xxi. 37. It is the last expedient, and the very utmost that could be done to reduce Sinners to Obedience; and if this will have no effect upon them, they must be left without all excuse. This is the heaviest aggravation of Sin, and that which renders Men utterly inexcusable; he was in the World,*
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and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not, Joh. i. 10, 11. If the only begotten Son of God had not come and manifested himself in so wonderful a manner to the World, something of a Plea might have been pretended; but to reject the Son of God was an evident despight done to the Father, and even hating of the Father who had sent him, as our Saviour declares, Joh. xv. 22, 23, 24. And the Blaspheming of the Holy Ghost in those, who vilified the Miracles of Christ, and ascribed them to Beelzebub, was therefore without forgiveness, because it was a rejecting of Christ, not as the Son of Man, but as God blessed for ever; and a despising and vilifying that which is the last means that can be used to reclaim the World; and that means whereby he manifested himself to be the Son of God. To reject Christ, was to reject the whole Trinity, which was jointly concern'd in this wonderful dispensation.

The Dignity of Christ's Person adds all the force and efficacy to his Doctrine that is possible; and therefore it was requisite that the Son of God should become incarnate. God had before spoken from Heaven, but that was too terrible and full of Majesty to be born by Mortals; and they that heard the voice, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was Commanded; and so terrible was the sight,
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that Moses said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*, Heb. xii. 19, 20, 21. But now God was pleas'd to converse with Man in a more familiar and humble manner; and our Blessed Saviour came to live amongst Men with all the gentleness and meekness of the Humane Nature, and all the Authority of the Divine. *For in him dwelleth all the Fullness of the Godhead Bodily*, Colos. ii. 9. The Godhead dwelt here in him under our Humane Nature, laying aside that awful Majesty, which no Man can approach unto.

II. We have a greater Example of all perfection and Holiness set before us by the Son of God Incarnate, than we could otherwise have had. It has been the general complaint made of other Teachers and Lawgivers, that they seldom observe their own Rules, or live themselves according to what they require of others. But our Saviour has given us an Example, if it be possible, even beyond his own Doctrine. For tho' he be no rigorous Lawgiver, but a most indulgent and gracious Master to us, yet he was pleas'd to excuse himself from no Duty or Instance of Obedience, but fulfilled both the Moral and the Ceremonial Law: there is nothing so mean, nor so difficult and painful but he perform'd it, to set us an absolute Pattern of Obedience to the Whole Duty of Man, in all that ever God requir'd of Mankind. *It became him to fulfill all Righteousness*; this was the end and intention of his coming into the World,

World, and he fulfilled it in the most absolute and perfect manner, in all particulars. And to give such an Example, is of unspeakable use and benefit: for Men are more easily led by Example than by Precept; and it is commonly observ'd, that it is Example for the most part which governs the World. Men will follow the Vices of those whose Vertues they never imitate; and the Faults of Wise and Great Men have too sure and too fatal an effect upon such, as their Excellencies never reach.

It was necessary that an Example of absolute perfection should be given to the World, and this Example must be given by one of the same nature with our selves, or else it might have been an Example for Angels and Spirits, but not for Men; and therefore such an Example the Son of God Incarnate only could give, because it was impossible for any created Being under all the Infirmities and Temptations incident to Humane Nature to live up to such a Divine Height and Excellency of all perfection as our Saviour did, and to leave such an Example to the World.

He came not to teach us the wisdom of this World, how to get Riches and Honours; in this Mankind was well enough instructed before, and it could not but be unworthy of the Son of God to be Born into the World with a design to enjoy the pleasures and the profits, and the honours of it, this was beneath the Majesty of Heaven, and the Infinite Perfection
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and Essential Bliss and Happiness of the Divine Nature. But to manifest himself, to shew the mean and worthless Vanity of those things, of which Men are so fond; to give an Example of Contentment in a low Condition, of Victory under Temptations and of Patience and Meekness under the severest Afflictions and Torments; to discover to Men the way to Happiness in the worst Circumstances of this World, to teach those who enjoy this World's goods, not to be proud of them, nor despise others, and those who want them; to be contented and happy without them, to lead Men in the way to happiness thro' all Conditions, thro' all the Miseries and Calamities which must befall many of us in this Mortal State; this is a Glorious and Godlike Design, it is such as none but the Son of God could perform, and such as we may in reason believe he would undertake; and for which he might vouchsafe to live a Humane Life upon Earth.

III. The Mediation and Intercession of Christ for us is of greater power and efficacy, than any could have been, if the Son of God had not become Man to die for our sakes. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. he was to be Man as well as God, that coming with Divine Power and Authority, and yet with the Affability and Accessibility of a Man, he might in all respects be
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fully qualified to perform the Office of a Mediator between God and Man. If he had not been God, he could not have come with absolute Authority to offer us Terms of Reconciliation; and unless he had been Men, he could not have treated with Men in so familiar and condescending a way upon these terms.

And the Right and Authority of Christ's Mediation and Intercession in behalf of Sinners, is founded upon his merits and satisfaction for the Sins of Men; and this supposes him to be both God, and Man; *Man*, that he might Suffer and Die for us; and *God*, that his Divine Nature might give an infinite value to his Death and Sufferings, and render them satisfactory for the Sins of the World. Tho' it should be supposed (which can never be proved) that God in his Mercy might have pardoned Sinners without the satisfaction of Christ; yet if in mercy he might have forgiven, he might in justice have punish'd them, unless satisfaction had been made; and nothing could have made satisfaction to his Justice, but the Sufferings of his Son. The Obedience and Sufferings of no Created Being could have been of that value as to make satisfaction for the Sins of Mankind; and therefore no Creature could have Redeemed Man, or have become Mediator for him upon the terms of his own merits in Man's behalf, so as to plead the price of Redemption laid down for him. God may grant the Requests of Angels and Men,
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out of his free Mercy and Bounty, but there can be no necessary force and efficacy in Intercessions, where there is no precedent merit and satisfaction on the part of the Intercessor. But Christ pleads his merits on our account, and mediates our Cause with his Father upon the terms of strict Justice, and by vertue of the Ransom of his own Blood; and is so powerful an Intercessor for us, that not only the Mercy and Goodness, but even the Justice of God cannot deny his Intercession. It was the free grace of God to send his Son to Suffer in our stead, but since he was pleas'd to admit of this Commutation of the Punishment which we had deserv'd, and to transferr it upon his own Son; his Death was *a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World*; which the death of no Creature could have been, and therefore no Created Being could have become our Mediator by vertue of his own Merit, and have satisfy'd the utmost Justice of God; much less could any Creature have merited the assistance of Grace, and the Rewards of Glory for us.

IV. The Incarnation of the Son of God is the most effectual means to excite in us Faith, and Hope, and Charity, and unfeigned Love of God and of our Neighbour, the love of Vertue, and the hatred of Sin; and to dispose and engage us to all Vertue and Piety. The Son of God assuming our Nature, gives us the
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greatest assurance of his compassion for our Infirmities, and his desire of our Happiness. God is infinitely merciful in *his own Divine Nature*, but he never could give such an instance of his mercy and love towards *ours*, as by taking it upon himself; God is essential Truth and Holiness; and yet *willing more abundantly to shew to the Heirs of Promise the immutability of his Counsel, he confirm'd it with an Oath*; and in like manner in the present Case, God being willing to give us all the grounds for Faith and Confidence in him that can be imagined, took our Nature upon him, that *by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to deceive, we might have a strong Consolation*, both from the goodness of the Divine Nature, and from the tenderness and compassions of our own. *For we have not an High-Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*, and therefore are exhorted in this confidence, *to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace*, Heb. iv. 15, 16. vi. 17, 18. We are assured, that he has the greatest concern for that Nature which he has taken into a personal Union with himself, and continually presents before his Father in Heaven for us. And we are likewise assured of the Father's love towards us; *For now we know that he loves us, seeing he has not withheld his Son, his only Son from us*, but sent him into the World to die for our Salvation. *He that spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all; how shall he not with him also*
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freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God, that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us, Rom. viii. 32, 33, 34.

(y) Chry-
sost. l. 1. c. 12.
Tom. 7.

And as the manifestation of Christ in the Flesh is peculiarly adapted and design'd to raise our Faith and Hope, and Trust and Confidence and Dependance upon God, so it is above all the most prevailing motive to engage our Love. The infinite Love of Christ in dying for us, must needs require and even extort from us all possible returns of Love and Praise and Adoration. (y) St. Chrysostome gives this as one Reason, why the Son of God was Incarnate, to become the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind; because if it had been possible for a Creature to undertake and effect our Redemption, Men would never have thought they could have had esteem enough for him, or have made due expressions of their gratitude, unless they had Deified him, and committed Idolatry in Worshipping him, and paying him all Divine Honours: and to prevent this in Moses, who was but a Temporal Deliverer, and but a Type of Christ, his Sepulchre was conceal'd from the Israelites. So dear is the memory of great and generous Benefactors wont to be, that Men are apt to think they never can be sufficiently grateful to them, unless they even adore and worship them;

them, which was one chief occasion of Idolatry among the Heathens; therefore the Redemption of the whole World was a thing that could belong only to the Son of God, to whom all Love and Reverence, all Worship and Adoration is due. And this being the great Aim and Design of the Christian Religion to bring us to obey God upon Principles of Love, the Foundation of it is laid in the Love of God towards us. Nothing can be conceiv'd, which could have so powerfully prevail'd upon Men to love God, as the Incarnation of his Son; and Love being the only principle of Obedience, which can be acceptable to God, this must be the most proper and fitting dispensation, which is most apt to excite in us the Love of God. The Power and Majesty of God had been manifested before in the Creation and Preservation and Government of the World, and in many signal Judgments upon Sinners: the Divine Mercy and Goodness was likewise visible in the daily Blessings bestowed upon Mankind, but *the exceeding Riches of his Grace* was made known *in his kindness towards us thro' Christ Jesus*, Ephes. ii. 7.

And as this must cause us to love God, so it must make us, if any thing can do it, to have love one for another. God Incarnate is the Head and Vital Principle, the common Bond of Life and Union between Christians; and we are oblig'd to mutual Love, not only because we are all of the same Nature, but be-
cause

cause the Son of God has been pleas'd to dignifie that Nature in assuming it. This ought to make us value our own Nature, and to have a due esteem and affection for it, in whomsoever it be. How can we despise any one who is a Partaker of that Nature, of which the Son of God has vouchsafed to partake in its meanest Condition? or hate any, whom he loved so well as to die for him? This makes all Men worthy of our respect and love, not of our contempt or hatred; they are of that Nature, which Christ, as Man, is of, and they are his Purchase, and we must love what is his, and what he has so dearly paid for, if we love Christ himself. *Beloved, says St. John, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, 1 Joh. iv. 11.* And this is St. Paul's Argument to the *Corinthians* to excite them to Charity towards their poor Brethren. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye thro' his poverty might be rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9.*

The Incarnation of the Son of God must likewise cause us to have the greatest hatred and detestation of Sin, as being that which is most displeasing to God, and that which occasioned the death of his only Son to atone for it. And it is evident, that all who neglect so great Salvation, must expect the heaviest Punishment for so heinous a Contempt and Provocation:

vocation: if we will be gained by any methods of Love, Christ has done all that is possible to effect it: But if we will not be moved by all the kindness and compassions of Love itself, we can hope for no further favour; if the Son of God came to die for us, and we will not regard it so as to be made the better by it, nothing more can be look'd for, but *Wrath and fiery Indignation.*

So that the manifestation of the Son of God in the Flesh was the most proper and fitting means to work upon the Love, and Fear, and Hope, and all the Passions of Mankind, and to produce all those Graces in us which the Gospel requires. It is the best fitted both to the Nature and Design of the Gospel, and to the Nature of Man; and therefore if any other Means had been possible, yet none that we can conceive could have been so effectual to procure the Salvation of Men.

C H A P. XXI.

Of the Fulness of Time, or the Time appointed by God for the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour.

Since we have so great Evidence to satisfy us that Christ did come into the World, and die for us, it would be the greatest ingratitude and folly as well as Impiety to reject him, tho' we should not be able to give any exact account concerning the Reasons for the time of his coming. *It is not for us to know the Times or the Seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, Acts i. 7.* These things are in God's disposal, and unless we can be contented to leave the manner and circumstances of our Salvation to his Wisdom, we only shew how little we deserve his Mercies, and how unwilling we are to believe them, and to accept of them. But tho' it be a mere Cavil to dispute the coming of Christ upon a bare Circumstance and Nicety concerning the Reasons for the particular time of his Incarnation; yet it will be easie to give such an account of the time appointed for the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour, as may serve to silence all Objections against it; and to desire to know any further of it is an useless and unwarrantable Curiosity; for all must acknowledge

ledge that God may have the best and wisest Reasons for his Dispensations, which yet we may not be able to comprehend, and which it doth not concern us to know. The Scripture teacheth us that Christ was born in the *Fulness of Time*, when all things were fulfilled and accomplished in order to it, and the World was in a due readiness and preparation for his coming.

I. God had beforehand us'd all other means to shew the necessity of sending his Son at last, for he was not to be sent but upon necessity; and it was fit they to whom he was sent, should be sensible of that necessity, that they might the better know how to value the infinite mercy of God towards them, in sending his only Son to be born and to die for them. In the beginning of the World, and at the Re-peopling it after the Flood, Revelations were so frequent, and the Will and Commands of God so well known, and his promise to send his Son so clearly understood, that there could be no necessity that Christ should be Born then, since their Faith in him and their Obedience to God's Commandments was as effectual to the Salvation of them that lived so long before his coming, as it is to us, that live so many Ages after it. The Lives of Men in the beginning of the World were so long, and the generations deceased were so few before the Flood, that nothing but wilfull ignorance and negligence could be the cause of so

much wickedness. And after the Flood, the Race of Mankind being reduc'd to so few Persons, the Example and Instructions of *Noah* and *Abraham*, and the other Patriarchs might have been sufficient to keep Men within the measures of their Duty, and to preserve a belief and expectation of the promis'd *Messiah*. For they were saved by their Faith in Christ to come, as we must be saved by Faith in him already come so many Ages past; and therefore to suppose it necessary that he should be Born in those Ages, we must suppose it necessary that he should be Born in every Age of the World, which I think no Man will imagine.

But when the rest of the World was generally fallen away to Idolatry, God chose to himself one Person, from whom by a course of Miracles he raised a mighty Nation, who by their Journeyings and Captivities, and by all the dispensations of his Providence towards them, were appointed to make known his Name and Truth among the *Gentiles*. In the time of *Moses* this People it self was incapable of that pure and Spiritual Worship which the *Messiah* was to appoint, and stood in need of a Ceremonial Law and Service to restrain them from Idolatry, and to preserve the sense and remembrance of the Promises and Laws deliver'd to *Adam*, and *Noah*. And this Ritual Service was unworthy that the *Messiah* should come purposely to appoint it, who was indeed himself the principal thing signified and typified by

by it; and the Types and Figures of himself could not be Instituted by himself in Person; for then they would have been insignificant, and there could have been no use or occasion for them. But the most Excellent and Divine Institution was reserv'd for his Appointment, to which all the rest was but preparatory. The Law was added because of Transgressions, till the Seed should come, to whom the Promise was made, Gal. iii. 19.

After the Revelation of God's Will and Commandments had thro' the great neglect and wickedness of Mankind become ineffectual, God sent all his Servants the Prophets daily rising up early and sending them; an expression setting forth his great care and watchfulness over his People for their good, yet they hearkened not unto him, nor inclin'd their ear, but hardned their neck, Jer. vii. 25, 26. To Cure this strange stubbornness, and their proneness to Idolatry, God sent this People into Captivity for Seventy years; which wrought so thorough a Reformation in them, that they were never afterwards given to Idolatry, but endur'd all extremities of Torments rather than they would be brought to any compliance with the Heathen Worship; and therefore there could be no longer such necessity that the Ceremonial Law should be continu'd to them to keep them from the Worship of Idols: But in other respects their Provocations were still very great. And as the Lord in the Parable first

sent his Servants, and last of all his Son, saying, *they will reverence my Son*; and thereby left those wicked Men without excuse, and manifested the Justice of his Vengeance upon the Murtherers of his own Son. So God first sent his Prophets, and when the *Jews* who had been train'd in the knowledge and worship of him, and were to conveigh it to other Nations, would not be reclaim'd by them, but revil'd and destroy'd them, and then set up their own Traditions in opposition to their Doctrines; he sends his Beloved Son before he would utterly take away their City and Nation, and effected that by the death of his Son, whom they Crucified, which the experience of so many Ages had shewn could be effected no other way.

God reveal'd himself *at sundry times and in divers manners*, and in his Infinite Wisdom proportioned the ways and measure of his Revelations to the capacities and the necessities of the several Ages, in which they were made, till at last he *hath spoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1, 2. *When we were Children we were in bondage under the Elements of the World: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law*, Gal. iv. 3, 4.

2. The Reception of Christ and his Gospel in the World would have been much more difficult, if so many Prophets in so many several Ages had not foretold his coming. Our Sa-
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viour himself and his Apostles after him appeal to *Moses* and the Prophets for the truth of their Doctrine; this was the great Argument which they us'd to the *Jews* in Confirmation even of their Miracles themselves, they prov'd that the Prophets had foretold that Christ should come at that very time when he came, and that he should work those Miracles which he wrought, and should empower his Disciples to do the like: his Death and Resurrection, and Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost were all Prophesied of; and Prophecies thus foretelling the Miracles, and Miracles fulfilling the Prophecies, and both mutually confirming and supporting each other afforded all the Evidence that could be given; for Prophecies and Miracles are all the ways by which God can be suppoed to reveal himself to Mankind. And therefore thousands of the *Jews* were convinc'd out of the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, and were Converted to the Christian Faith. And the Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* are still an unanswerable Argument in vindication of our Religion; which Argument we must have wanted, if our blessed Saviour had come so much sooner, as not to have been Prophesied of so many Ages beforehand. And those who reject the Gospel now, would have thought they had had much more Reason on their side than they can now pretend to have; for there had then been so much less means for their Conviction. So

that the coming of our Saviour was deferr'd to give the greater Evidence, and the fuller conviction of his being the Christ.

It would have been hard to believe that the Son of God should come into the World with little or no notice given of it beforehand, and few or no Prophets sent to foretell his coming, and prepare his way. But when he had been so long before Prophecy'd of, even from the beginning of the World, thro' the several Ages of it, when there had been a general expectation of the *Messiah* to be born, and the Time and Place, and Tribe and Family and Person of whom he was to be born, by degrees, and at several times had been foretold; when Mens hopes and desires to see him were thus from Age to Age awakened and alarmed, this was a Solemnity worthy to introduce and attend the Son of God into the World, and a Method which would prove a standing Evidence of his being come into it.

3. The time of Christ's coming may depend upon things which we are incapable of knowing. For it may depend upon the duration of the World, and it is impossible for any Man to know how long that shall be. The Scripture speaks of the times of the Gospel under the Phrase of the *last Days*, but this is to be understood in relation not to the continuance of the World, but to the Christian Dispensation, which is the last means of Salvation that God will vouchsafe to Mankind, and with regard

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to the *Jewish* Church and Government, which was just then at an end, as I shall shew in the next Chapter.

Now if the World may continue as long under the dispensation of the Gospel as it had done before it (and no Man can tell but it may) we shall find little cause to wonder that Christ was not sooner born into the World. For we find that the Faith and Zeal of Christians decays, as we are at a farther distance of time from the Incarnation of our Saviour, and the first propagation of his Gospel, and the length of the time it self proves a temptation to some to disbelieve it; for men are apt to give less credit to what happened long ago, and to think themselves less concern'd in it. If therefore Christ had been born at the beginning of the World, how many more pretences would those Men have feign'd to themselves for their Infidelity, who are now so prone to unbelief, and so unwilling to be Christians?

Men are tempted to suspect that there is something of obscurity and uncertainty in all things long since past; and if Christ had been born a thousand or two thousand years sooner, those who now think he came too late, would then have cavilled that he came too soon, and that it was too long ago to be believed, and had happened in a dark and fabulous Age. And therefore it seems that Christ came in the very season and centre of time; that as the former

former Ages were not so remote as not to be capable of all the benefits of his Death and Passion to be in due time accomplish'd; so the last Ages of the World may have no pretence to question the truth of the Christian Religion upon any account of the long distance of time since the Death of our Saviour and his Apostles. This may be the Case for ought any Man can tell, or many other Reasons there might be much better and more important than this, to deferr the Incarnation of our Saviour; and therefore it is an absurd thing to raise Objections about it. Many Reason there might be for it, which we are incapable of knowing; and it is sufficient for us to know, that it was *in the fulness of time*, and that this time was the most proper and expedient, and therefore was the time appointed and determined by God from all Eternity.

4. God had by the various Methods of his Providence given such signal opportunities to the *Gentiles* to become acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as did mightly prepare them for the acknowledgment of Christ at his coming into the World. All the Dispensations of the Divine Providence from the Beginning, had been as so many several preparations to the Birth of Christ, God chose *Abraham* to be the Father of a peculiar People; and when that People had been by the constant manifestation of a miraculous Providence preserv'd, and by their Laws and Ceremonies

monies distinguished from all other People, they were driven into Captivity, as well in mercy to other Nations, as by God's just Judgment upon them for their Sins, that by this means the *Gentiles* might be instructed in the Worship of the true God, and the Prophecies concerning Christ might become divulged, and all Nations might be in a readiness to acknowledge and receive him who was to be *the desire of all Nations*, and the joy of all People. First, the Ten Tribes were by *Shalmaneser* carried away Captive, and then the two remaining Tribes by *Nebuchadnezzar*; and *Cyrus* was by Name appointed to restore them. *Alexander's* Conquests made yet way for a farther reception of the Prophecies, which were the most considerable about the time of the Captivity. And besides the Prophecy of *Balaam*, by which the Wise Men were directed to find out Christ by the guidance of a Star, those of *Isaiab*, and *Jeremiah*, and *Daniel*, must be well known in the East. The Bible had been about three hundred years before our Saviour's Birth, at the Command of a Heathen Prince Translated into the *Greek* Tongue, which was by the Victories of *Alexander* become the most known Language in the World. And we read of no Revolution of Empires, no Blessing, no Affliction which befell the *Jews*, but it contributed in a remarkable manner to raise an expectation of Christ, and to prepare for his Coming.

(2) Sueton.
in Vespas.
c. 4 Tacit.
Hist. lib. v.

It is certain, that at the time of his Birth, there was among the Jews an Universal expectation of the *Messiah*, and that it was a receiv'd Opinion in that Age all over the East, that a great Prince should arise out of *Judea*, this appears both from the Scriptures, and from (2) Heathen Writers; the Wise Men came to enquire after him, and *Herod's* Jealousie proceeded to the utmost Rage and Cruelty, and could not have failed of success, if it had been against any but the true *Messiah*, whom God did by an immediate Revelation deliver out of his hands. All the World stood in expectation of some extraordinary Person, and it was no unwellcome piece of Flattery to one of the *Roman* Emperors not long after, to have it reported, that he was the Prince spoken of and expected in the East, but it was esteemed his Glory and his Happiness to be thought the King that was to arise amongst a despised and hated People. The expectation of Christ was so great, that he could not lie conceal'd in that obscure and mean Condition, but was adored in a Manger, and receiv'd more than Royal Honours from the remotest parts of the Earth. And in this respect it was *the fulness of time*, or the most convenient and proper time for Christ to appear, because the Divine Providence had wonderfully disposed and prepared the World for the expectation of him.

5. The particular temper and disposition of the Age in which our Saviour was born, made

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it the most fitting and proper Age for him to be born in; for there were several things peculiar to that Age, which very much conduce to the proof of the certainty of his Religion. That Age was so remarkable, and the History of it has been delivered down to us by so many eminent Writers, that it is more studied, and generally better known than any Age of the World besides; and it was fit that a thing of this nature and consequence should come to pass in such an Age, that it might be fully enquired into, in any Age afterwards, and that no distance of time might cause such doubts concerning it, as should ever render it the less certain to any, who are willing to acquaint themselves with the truth of it.

If it had been an Imposture, this surely had been the most unlikely time of any for it to succeed. No Prince could be more jealous than *Herod*, who was so enraged at the Report of the Birth of Christ, that he too plainly shew'd how much he credited it. And no Age perhaps since the Creation could be more unlikely to have a Cheat put upon it than this; in which Peace and Learning and all Polite Arts flourish'd, which refine Men's Understandings, and make them the most unfit and difficult to be imposed upon. Policy was in its highest perfection in the Courts of *Augustus* and *Tiberius*, which have been esteemed the greatest Patterns of it ever since; the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were in great Power and Authority

rity at *Jerusalem*, who were a subtle Generation of Men, and the worst Enemies any one could have to deal withall. Vice, which was likely to give the greatest hindrance to a holy Religion, was the fashion of the times, and that Empire was never so abandoned to wickedness, as at the first propagation of the Gospel. As Men were then most able to discover any Imposture, so they must have been most unwilling to find the Christian Religion true, which puts such a check to all Licentiousness, and to their beloved and long accustomed Vices. Vice would be sure to make a strong defence, and an eager Plea, and nothing could be difficult for it to discover, when it had such a number of such subtle and devoted Advocates.

In this Conjunction of time the Saviour of the World appears, and he appears in a mean and low Condition, despised by his own People, who soon became as much despised themselves by all the World besides. The Prince of Peace is Born in a time of settled and Universal Peace, when Men had most leisure and opportunity to examine and consider things; and when by the Establishment of the *Roman Empire* under *Augustus* in its full power and extent, there was an open and free Correspondence between all Nations, and the Apostles and their Followers by this means might find a like admittance to preach the Gospel in all Countries, but to be alike hated and persecuted in all parts of the World. The

Religion

Religion of Christ was not to make advantage of any Troubles and Confusions in the Empire, as that of *Mahomet* afterwards did, but to recommend it self by its own worth and efficacy to the most serious and impartial Minds; and under all these disadvantages it soon made its way into the Emperor's Court, where Craft and Luxury, and every thing that is most contrary to the purity and simplicity of the Gospel reigned. *St. Paul* had his Profelytes in *Cæsar's Household*, and his Bonds in Christ were manifest in all the Palace, and in all other places at Rome, *Phil. i. 13. iv. 22.* The truth of the Gospel approved itself to the most prejudiced Judgments, it stood all the Trials, and Conquer'd all Opposition, that Wit and Learning, and Vice it self could make. For by the leave of the *Atheists* and *Deists* of our own Age, the Christian Religion found the subtlest and most dangerous Adversaries at its first propagation. The *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks* encountred *St. Paul* at *Athens*, and these last especially were inferiour to no other Sect of Philosophers; either for their obstinacy in adhering to their own Opinions, or for their Art and Skill in Disputation. And it appears from the several Apologies made afterwards in vindication of our Religion, that all was at the very first alledged against it, which can with any presence or colour be objected.

Thus was Christ Born in the fulness of time, when all the Prophecies concerning his coming were

were fulfilled, and when the World was in expectation of him, and had such general notice of his coming; in a time the most unlikely for an Imposture to pass undiscover'd, and therefore the most seasonable for Truth to manifest it self; since that must needs be true, which neither Learning, nor Prejudice, nor Vice, nor Interest could prove to be false. The accomplishment of Prophecies, and the Conversion and Martyrdom of such numbers of Men in such an Age, recommends the Gospel to us with all the advantage which any Juncture of Time could give.

C H A P. XXII.

*Of the last Days; and of the last Day,
or the Day of Judgment.*

BY the *last Days* in the Scriptures must be meant either the last Days of the World, or the last Days of the *Jewish* State and Government, or the Days of the Gospel Dispensation; which are the last Days in respect of the Means and Opportunities of Salvation vouchsafed to Mankind.

I. The last Days of the World are seldom mention'd directly, and in express terms, but under such Resemblances as were fit to represent them in the description of other Events.

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For it was a known thing among the *Jews*, that their whole Dispensation being Typical, whatever happened to them under their Law and Government, must afterwards be fulfilled in a more eminent manner under the Oeconomy and Dispensation of the *Messias*; and therefore the last Days of *Jerusalem* must be Typical of the last Days of the World. For the Destruction of *Jerusalem* at the Conclusion of the *Jewish* Dispensation was only a Type of the final Destruction of the World at the consummation of all things, when Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24. For which Reason our Saviour makes use of such words, *Matt. xxiv.* as are applicable to both of these events, and oftentimes more fitly to the last Judgment, that after the Destruction of *Jerusalem* it might appear, that the rest remains still to be accomplished at the Day of Judgment. But there are likewise such Expressions used, as evidently shew that the Destruction of *Jerusalem* is the thing immediately designed in the Prophecy. This will appear, if we consider several Verses of that Chapter. *Then let them which be in Judea, flee into the Mountains,* ver. 16. and that with the greatest hast; *for let him which is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house,* v. 17. *Neither let him which is in the field; return back to take his Cloaths,* v. 18. But the Condition of such would be very miserable, who should be unfit for flight. *And woe*

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unto them that are with Child, and to them that give suck in those days, v. 19. But pray ye that your flight be not in the Winter, neither on the Sabbath Day, v. 20. There will be no flying from the general destruction of the World, but the Disciples are here warned to fly from the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and escape into the Mountains, and they are commanded to pray that their flight might be hindred neither by the season of the year, nor by the Sabbath, on which the *Jews* were permitted to travel but a very little way. Which supposes that the World was to last after the Tribulation there spoken of; and that therefore the final destruction of this material World is not the thing there immediately meant. And except those days should be shortned, there should no *Flesh* be saved: but for the *Elects* sake those days shall be shortned, v. 22. If this Destruction should have raged long in that manner, no Man of the *Jews* could have survived it, but it was to be so abated and so soon over, that the converted *Jews* might be preserved from it; which Promise was very remarkably and wonderfully fullfilled to the Christians at the Siege of *Jerusalem*, who made their escape into the Mountains, and retir'd to *Pella*. For wheresoever the Carcass is, there will the Eagles be gathered together, ver. 28. which is a plain allusion to the Roman Eagles, or the Standards of their Armies. Immediately after the tribulation

lation of those days shall the Sun be darkned, and the Moon shall not give her light, and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens shall be shaken, ver. 29. This was in some respect litterally fulfilled at the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. But it is usual with the Prophets by these Figures to describe the Destruction of Nations, and the false Teachers are styl'd by St. *Jude*, ver. 13. wandring Stars, because the true were as the Sun and fix'd Stars. *Balaam* Prophecy'd that a Star should come out of *Jacob*, and a Scepter should rise out of *Israel*, Numb. xxiv. 17. and that Impostor in the time of *Adrian*, who pretended to be the *Messias* called himself *Barchochebas*, or the Son of a Star. So that by the darkning of the Sun and Moon, and the falling of the Stars from Heaven, by an usual Metaphor, was meant the failing of the Jewish State and Government. This is agreeable to what (a) *Maimonides* relates of the form of Speech usual with the *Arabians*, when they would express any great Calamity, into which any Man was fallen. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass 'till all these things be fulfilled; that is, 'till they be accomplish'd

(a) Quando enim vaticinatur (Isaias) de Gentis alicujus destructione, vel de Populi alicujus magni interitu ait Stellas cecidisse, caelos interiisse, & contremiscere, solem obtenebratum, terram vastatam & commotam esse, aliisque multis similibus locutionibus Parabolicis utitur; sicut apud Arabes de eo, cui singulare aliquod infortunium accidit, dicitur, quod caelum ipsius in terram conversum sit, vel super terram ejus ceciderit. Maimon. More Nevoch, Part. 2. c. 29. Consuevit enim de regno aliquo loqui ac si esset mundus peculiaris, hoc est, caelum & terra, Ib.

in their first and immediate sense in the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was destroy'd forty years after.

(b) Lightf.
Harm. of
the N. T.
S. ix.

II. These were therefore properly the last days of the City and Government of the *Jews*, who were wont to call the (b) coming of the *Messias* the *New Creation*, according to the Prophet, *Isa. lxxv. 17. lxxvi. 22.* and the world to come; whereupon in their account, the time immediately foregoing must be the last days of the former World. And thus the Apostle speaks, *they are written for our Admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. x. 11.* which may be as truly rendred, upon whom the ends of the Times or Ages are come; for so the word there used signifies. The World had now continued about four thousand years, and this was the end or conclusion of the Ages, when a new period of time was to begin. And the same Apostle shewing, that Christ is not like the Jewish High-Priests, *for then must he often have suffered, since the foundation of the World, adds, but now once in the end of the World hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26.* where, tho' in our Translation the word *World* be twice used, yet in the Original it is express'd by two different words, the first signifying the visible and material World, but the latter signifying *Ages*, to teach us that Christ appeared to suffer for us in the end of the Ages, not in the end of this material World. For the Apo-

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stle would have used the same word, if he had meant the same thing in both places, and would never have made so sudden a change of words to no purpose.

The last Days, which the Prophet *Joel* foretold, and for which he is quoted by St. *Peter, Acts ii. 16.* are the last days of the *Jewish* State and Government, which was shortly to receive its final period; the *Jewish* Law and Power was then near its end, and the days or times just before its conclusion and ultimate period was the space granted the *Jews* for their Conversion, before the destruction of their City and Nation; and these were the last days of their dispensation, and the last opportunity that was to be afforded them, as a distinct and peculiar People.

III. The Scripture speaks of the times of the Gospel as the last days; which is to be understood, not with respect to the duration of time, but to the dispensation of the Gospel; it is the last dispensation which God will vouchsafe to Mankind, the last means and opportunity of Salvation which will be granted to the World, and it is Prophecy'd of under the Character of the last days, *Isa. ii. 2. Micah iv. 1, 2.* For the opportunity and time allotted for the means of Salvation, is wont to be stiled the day of Salvation. *If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes, Luke xix. 42. To day*

C c 3

if

The Reasonableness and Certainty

if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Heb. iii. 7, 15. iv. 7. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of Salvation have I succoured thee; behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. Isa. xlix. 8. So that by Day is signified Season or Opportunity in the Language of Scripture, as Night is put to signify the contrary. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day, the Night cometh, when no man can work, Joh. ix. 4.

The Scriptures herein consider the continuance and duration of the World no otherwise than with relation to the dispensations which God has been pleas'd to afford Men in order to their Salvation, and in this respect the time under the Gospel is the *last days*, tho' it be of never so long duration, because the Gospel is the last dispensation. The last Age of the World is the Age under the Gospel, whether it be longer or shorter than the rest, and the whole duration of this Age is stiled the last Days, since by Days is not to be understood the length or continuance of any certain time, but the dispensation of the Gospel, and the time under the Gospel is the *last Days*; not because the World then began to draw towards its period or dissolution, but because the Gospel offers us the last opportunity of Salvation, and is the conclusion and period, and the final consummation of the grace and goodness of God extended towards Mankind. The Gospel

being

being the last means of Salvation offer'd to Mankind, the whole time under it is therefore sometimes stiled the *last Days*, the last distinction of Times, the last Season and Opportunity to be expected.

IV. The Day of Judgment being purposely conceal'd both from Men and Angels to keep us in a continual watchfulness and expectation of it, the Apostle St. Paul speaks of it, as that which as to the time of it is uncertain, and therefore is at all times to be expected. And this gave occasion to some to mistake his meaning, tho' there is nothing in his words which implies that the Day of Judgment was then approaching. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord, 1 Thes. iv. 15, 17. ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες, οἱ περιλειπόμενοι, we the living, the remaining, that is the faithful which shall then be alive and remain upon the Earth. St. Paul speaks of the Faithful here under a twofold denomination, viz. of the *Dead* and the *Living*, and speaking of the Living he uses the first Person Plural, as being himself yet in the number of the Living; not that he should be of that number at the Day of Judgment.

C c 4

Thus

(c) *Tollit animos* (Tullus Hostilius) *quasi ipse mandasset, spes inde nostris, metus hostibus*, Flor. lib. 1. c. 3. --- *Stipendiarium nobis Provinciam fecit* (Scipio Africanus,) *Hispaniam* lib. ii. c. 17. *Creticum Bellum, si vera volumus noscere, nos fecimus*, lib. iii. c. 7.

Thus frequent (c) Examples are to be found, where Historians Relating matters of Fact which happened long before their own Times, use the expressions of *we* and *our*; we Fought, our Army Conquer'd; that is, the People of which I am now a Member, or the Army of this People. We (the *English*) Conquer'd France in the Reign of King Henry V. and if this had been Prophecy'd of, it might have been said, we shall Conquer, &c. Our Saviour speaking to the Jews, says *Moses, gave you not that bread from Heaven*, when they had told him before, *our Fathers did eat Manna in the Desert*, Joh. vi. 31, 32. And it might as well have been said to the Patriarchs you shall eat manna in the Wilderness, as to the Jews of our Saviour's time, you did eat it.

A Prophet foretelling things to come to pass after his own death, might say, We shall do so and so, that is, those of this Nation and People shall do it to which I belong; and therefore reckon my self in the Number, tho' I can have no share in the Action, nor live to see it. In the same manner St. Paul says, *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*, 1 Cor. xv. 51. that is, we who are not yet in the number of the Dead, but are to

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be reckoned amongst the present and future Living. As when he writes to the *Ephesians*, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by Nature the Children of wrath, even as others, Eph. ii. 3. it is Paraphras'd by Dr. Hammond thus, among who we of the Gentile Church of Rome, from whence I write, formerly lived, &c. It is certain St. Paul expected his own death, 2 Tim. iv. 6. but it is usual with him to speak in his own person by a Figure, and sometimes even when he mentions himself by Name, 1 Cor. iv. 6. and he expressly declares that he did neither by word nor letter signify that the Day of Christ was at hand, 2 Thes. ii. 2.

V. The Day of Judgment is describ'd with so much Solemnity, and so many Particulars, that it may seem impossible for them all to be dispatched in the compass not only of one but of many Days. But (d) the Jews, from whom our Saviour and his Apostles took the expression of *the Day of Judgment*, understood by it a Time of many years continuance, and sometimes the term even of a thousand years. And by *Day* in the Language of the Scriptures is to be understood *Season*, or any period and distinction of time with respect to some particular thing or occasion; as *these are the Generations of the Heavens, and of the Earth, when they were Created, in the day that the Lord God made the Earth and the Heavens*, Gen. ii. 4. that

(d) Mede, Epist. xx.

(e) Grot.
ad 1 Cor.
iv. 3.

that is in the Time, consisting of six days; *the day of temptation in the Wilderness* was forty years, Heb. iii. 8, 9. Nay St. Peter uses it to express Eternal Duration, *to him be Glory*, says he, *both now and for ever*, which in the Original is, both now, and to the day of Eternity, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Day is us'd for Judgment itself, 1 Cor. iv. 3. and (e) so the Jews understood Days to be meant, Job xxiv. 1. In our Language *Days-man* signifies Judge or Umpire, Job ix. 33. and *Diem dicere* was the Law-term amongst the Romans for the Summons to a Tryal, but it doth not follow from thence, that the Cause must needs have been decided

(f) *Itaque cum ego diem in Siciliam irquirendi perexiguam postulasset, invenit esse, qui sibi in Achaicam biduo breviorum diem postularet: non ut is idem conficeret diligentiam, & industriam suam, quod ego meo labore & vigiliis consecutus sum. Et enim ille Achaicus inquisitor, ne Brundisium quidem pervenit. Ego Siciliam totam quinquaginta diebus sic obii, ut omnium populorum, privatorumque litteras injuriasque cognoscerem, Cic. in Ver. Act. i.*

upon the same Day, which was appointed for the hearing it. (e) Tully by Day in his first Oration against Verres, means the space of at least Fifty Days. There is no Reason then to suppose that the Last

Judgment must be confined to one or more Days; but it will take up as much time as the Solemnity of the Proceedings require.

— *Hunc diem Judicii ultimum diem dicimus, id est, novissimum Tempus. Nam per quot dies hoc judicium tendatur, incertum est: sed scripturarum more sanctarum diem poni solere pro tempore, nemo qui litteras illas quamlibet negligenter legerit, nescit. Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. xx. c. i.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

Of Sacraments.

THOU' the Jewish Law was very requisite at that time, and for that People, when it was in force, and the wisest and best Institution that could have been; yet it was indeed a yoke, and such a yoke as was burthensome and not to have been born, but in sure hopes and expectation of better things to come. And at the approach of the Son of Righteousness these shadows vanished, and the Types having attained their end and accomplishment, were laid aside; and in their room Christ has Instituted as few Rites as it was possible; only the two Sacraments; one for our Initiation, and first Reception; and the other for our Re-establishment and Confirmation in that Covenant, which he has been pleas'd to make with us. And yet even these are thought too many by some, who as if they were all Soul and Spirit without Body, are only for a Mental and Spiritual Worship. To vindicate therefore the Institution and use of Sacraments, I shall *First*, Consider the Nature and Design of Sacraments in General; *Secondly*, I shall shew how fully the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper answer the End and Design of the Institution of Sacraments.

I. I will

I. I will enquire into the Nature and Design of Sacraments in General. Sacraments may be consider'd, either, 1. as outward and visible Signs of our entrance into Covenant with God, or of our renewing our Covenant with him. Or, 2. As Pledges of God's Grace and Favour towards us. Or, 3. As the Means and Instruments, whereby he is pleas'd to convey into our Souls the blessed Influences of his Holy Spirit. Or, lastly, they may be consider'd as visible Rites, whereby we are admitted into the visible Society of Christ's Church, or profess our Communion with it. And in all these respects it will appear, how beneficial and requisite the Institution of Sacraments is, and how fitting it is that God in his Dispensations with Men should appoint something outward and visible to be done, or received by them.

I. Ceremonies and Rites of Initiation and of Worship have been Instituted in all Religions, which is Evidence sufficient, that the Nature of Man requires them, and that our Worship cannot be wholly Mental and Spiritual. And God is pleas'd in his Dealings with Mankind, to condescend to their Capacities, to ascribe to himself their Passions, to allude to their Customs, and to make use of such Means and Methods as Men are accustomed to in their Dealings with one another. He best understands Humane Nature, and knows all the dispositions and tendencies of it; *he knoweth*

knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are dust, Pf. ciii. 14. He considers that we are Flesh as well as Spirit, he fully comprehends the strict Union between the Soul and the Body, and the cause and manner of it, and how great influence the one hath upon the other in their several Operations; he planted in us all our Powers and Faculties, and sees all their Motions and Inclinations, the secret Springs of Action and Passion, and has accordingly fitted and proportioned the Institution of his Laws and Ordinances.

We see among Men, that they are not content only to understand one anothers Meaning, or to express their Minds in words, tho' they be the most solemn and significant; but are wont to use some Ceremony and Solemnity of Action and Circumstances in matters of great Importance; because this makes greater impression upon the Mind, and lays upon it a more forcible and lasting engagement by taking in the Senses and Passions, as Parties concerned with it; and this is by experience found to have the best effect to all the ends and purposes of Agreement and Obligation between Men. Oaths themselves are not found to be so secure to be rely'd upon, when they are only pronounc'd, as when they are taken with such Circumstances of words and gesture, as may create an awe and reverence in those who take them. For the manner and circumstances in which any action is done, raise and fix

fix the Attention, and express the Mind and Design of the Doer, and are better retain'd in the Memory, and work more upon the Will and Affections, than the Action of itself can do. This Orators very well understand; for the Art of Rhetorick is almost nothing else but a skillfull management of the circumstances of actions to the advantage of a Cause. And Philosophy informs us, that the evil or goodness of Actions depends chiefly upon their Circumstances; from whence we learn what the intention of the Mind is, and to what degree of Resolution it came in the performance of any Action. If an Action be performed at a solemn time and place, in the presence of Witnesses met together for that very purpose, upon great deliberation; with such words and gestures as are very significant to express our full Design and Intention; all these Circumstances consider'd make it much more our own proper Act and Deed than if it were done without them, tho' the Intention were the same. For what we declare before others to be our mind and purpose to do or undertake, we cannot but think our selves bound to under more obligations than if we barely design'd it, or promis'd it only to the Persons concern'd; because the design of declaring it is to lay upon our selves a farther obligation to perform it, and to call others as Witnesses against us, if we neglect the performance of it; and since our Resolution may be declar'd as well
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by Actions as by Words; he that expresses his Resolution both these ways, shews a farther design to oblige himself, than if he should only use words to express it; and if the Circumstances of Actions be stated, and solemn and significant, then all the ways and means concurr, by which it is possible for Men to declare and express their Minds in any Case, and to oblige themselves to the performance of any Covenant.

Now Sacraments are the Seals of the Covenant between God and Man, and when God is pleas'd to receive Men into Covenant with himself, it is requisite that Men should not barely give their assent to the Terms and Conditions of it, and declare that they will undertake them; but it is farther necessary that this should be done with all the Solemnity of Words and Actions that may engage them to the performance of it, and render them inexcusable if they transgress it; it is fitting it should be entred into, and renewed in the presence of Witnesses, that the Words should be Solemn, and the Actions Significant, and that nothing should be wanting, which may testify the Sincerity, and secure the Fidelity of the Undertakers. For if Covenants between Man and Man be made with all the formality of Witnesses, and Hands and Seals, and Delivery in solemn and express words; if Men know themselves too well to trust one another without all this Solemnity, it may well be
expected

expected, that when God is pleas'd to permit them to enter into Covenant with himself, he should not receive them under less Obligations of Caution and Security for their Integrity, than Men are wont to use amongst themselves. For every breach of Covenant with him, is infinitely more affronting and sinful than any breach of Covenant with Man can be; and therefore God, who will not be mocked, has appointed the most effectual Means to secure his Laws from contempt; he knows the deceitfulness of Man's heart, how perverse and stubborn it is, especially in things of such a Nature as these are of, to which Men are obliged by that Promise and Vow that they are required to make to him; and that all the Restraints and all the Remembrances which Words or Actions can afford, are little enough to keep Men in any tolerable measure to their Duty.

God was pleas'd to confirm his Promise to *Abraham* with an Oath; and therein shew'd himself willing to give all the assurance that the most Incredulous Man can desire, of the fix'd and unalterable stedfastness of his purpose, and the *Immutability of his Council*, that we might have a strong Consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And when God himself is pleas'd so far to condescend for our comfort and satisfaction, it is most reasonable that he should oblige us to perform our part of the Covenant, by all the ways that may put us in remembrance of our Duty,

Duty, and make us faithful and constant in the performance of it. And this could be effected by no better Means, than by outward Acts and visible Signs to testify and profess in the most serious and solemn manner, what our inward Faith and Resolutions are. This is that sort of security which Men have of one another, and when God makes a Covenant with Men, he considers them as Men; that is, he appoints such Solemnities of it as have respect to the Body as well as to the Soul; he doth not deal with us as with immaterial Spirits, but as with Creatures consisting of Soul and Body, and who little regard, and are little affected with that, which doth not some way concern the one as well as the other.

And it is strange to see to what Extravagancies those have proceeded, who have set up for a purely Spiritual Worship without any thing Sacramental for a visible Sign in it. For not to mention the Pretensions of our Enthusiasts, who by decrying the use and necessity of Sacraments, have made Religion nothing but an empty and uncertain Name amongst them. *Prophyrus*, who was a Man of Study and Learning, after he had Apostatiz'd from the Christian Religion, upon a ridiculous Occasion, as History relates it, was ashamed to return to the Heathen Idolatry, which after the appearance of Christianity in the World, soon became too notoriously absurd and abominable for any Man pretending so much to

Reason and good Sense to own it; but he placed all Divine Worship in Mental Prayer, and so far rejected all outward and Bodily Worship, (g) that he pretended the Prayers of Men were polluted and defiled by any thing of that Nature, and rendered unacceptable to the Deity, and that they never were sufficiently pure and perfect, if they were express'd by the Voice, but were then in their highest degree of Perfection, when they were all Contemplation, and Rapture, and Extasie. And the very same Notions were taught by (h) Apollonius Tyanaeus, and have been revived of late by such as undervalue all outward Ordinances, which may be a Warning to others, and an Evidence of the Divine Wisdom in appointing Sacraments as outward and visible Signs of our Covenant and Communion with God.

2. As these outward Signs serve to raise our Attention and fix our Minds, and to put us in Remembrance, that Heaven and Earth, Angels and Men are Witnesses against us, if we prove treacherous and unfaithful in this Covenant; so they are as Tokens and Pledges to us of God's Love and Favour, and of his merciful and gracious Intentions towards us, in taking us into Covenant with himself; they give us sensible and visible Assurances of that Grace, which is invisible and Spiritual. And this seems but necessary for Creatures that are led so much by Sense, as we all are in this Life, that God together with his Word and Promises

(g) Porphyr.
de Ab-
stinent.
lib. 2. §. 34.

(h) Euseb.
Præpar.
Evang.
lib. iv. c.
13.

Promises should besides appoint something, which may be perceiv'd by our Bodily Senses in Token of those Blessings which are bestow'd upon the Soul, that what is no Object of Sense, may yet be represented and signified by something that is sensible; to bring, as far as it is possible, the most Divine and Heavenly things down to our very Senses; which may be a Sign and Token of present Grace and Favour, and a Pledge and Earnest of future Glory and Happiness. And this is what is found very useful and necessary amongst Men, who are better contented with something present and in hand, tho' of little value, and insignificant in itself, as a Token and Pledge of what is promised and made over to them, than they are with the greatest Promises and Protestations without any thing as an Earnest to confirm them; because this is a Natural Evidence, that they are indeed in *Earnest* (as our *English* word expresses it) and really intend what they say, and it may be produced against them, if they should fail of Performance. Now what is inward and invisible is absent as to Sense, and what is future has need of something present to represent it to us: And God who was pleased to bind himself even by an Oath for our farther Comfort and Trust in him; has been pleased likewise, that he might be wanting in nothing, which might help our Infirmities and assist our Faith; he has been pleased in condescension to the Condition and

Frailty of Humane Nature, to appoint visible Signs and Pledges of that which is Invisible, and to give all the Assurance to our very Senses that they are capable of, that all the Promises of his Spiritual Blessings and Graces shall as certainly be fulfilled to us, as the outward Signs and Pledges are appointed for us, and duly received by us.

3. Sacraments are not only Signs and Tokens of Spiritual Gifts and Graces, but they are ordained as Means and Instruments of Grace and Salvation to us, that as the Body partakes in the Moral Actions of Vertue and Vice, so it might concur in the Religious Acts ordained for our Sanctification. For God, who has made us so as to consist of Soul and Body, and to have the Vital Union between Soul and Body depend upon a fit Disposition of the Body, and to be maintained by the Health and Nourishment of it, has been pleas'd to appoint certain Bodily Actions as the Means and Instruments of our Spiritual Life, that the Soul might not even in this Case, where itself is more immediately concern'd, be wholly independent of the Body; but that since both must be either happy or miserable together in the next Life, both might concur in the way and means of Salvation in this; yet so, as that the Soul should be the first and principal Agent, and the Body should act only in subordination and subserviency to it in this, as it doth in other Cases; that as in Moral Actions

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the Soul acts vertuously or viciously by the Body; so in Spiritual Actions the Soul might receive Advantage and Benefit by Bodily Acts, and be deprived of it upon the Omission or Neglect of such Acts.

The Body without the Soul is not the Man, nor the Soul without the Body, but both Soul and Body together, and the whole Man becomes dedicated and consecrated to God's Worship and Service in the use of Actions performed outwardly in the Body. And it is requisite that the Body as well as the Soul should be thus dedicated to God in Token of the Resurrection of the Body, and of that Happiness which it must receive in Heaven, if the Soul be happy. St. Paul exhorts the *Corinthians* to glorify God in their Body as well as in their Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 20. he tells them, that *the Body is not for Fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the Body: know ye not, says he, that your Bodies are the members of Christ? what? know ye not, that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost?* There have been those in several Ages, who have made such high Pretences to Spiritual Worship, that they would allow the Body no part or share in it; and others from the great irregularity and corruption which they could not but observe in their Carnal Appetites, have concluded that the Body was made not by God, but by a wicked Being, and that the Soul only was from God. Since therefore God is pleased to

regard our Bodies as Members of Christ, and Temples of the Holy Ghost, it was requisite, that in contradiction to these, and such like Errors, they should by some Rite or Sign be devoted to him, by which it might be declared, that *Christ is the Saviour of the Body*, Ephes. v. 23. and by which such Grace might be communicated, as to render it the Temple and place of Residence of the Holy Ghost, set apart and dedicated to him, and inhabited by him, that *the whole Spirit and Soul and Body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Thes. v. 23. It is the great and gracious Design of God to sanctifie the whole Man, and therefore Christ took not only an Humane Soul, but Humane Flesh likewise, to dignifie it in the Assumption, and offer it upon the Cross, and translate it into Glory. And as his Incarnation shews the particular Regard he has for the Body as well as for the Soul of Man, so the whole Institution of the Gospel hath relation to both.

4. Lastly, The Sacraments are Fœderal Rites of our Admission into the Church, as into a visible Society, and of our Union with it as such. For we cannot be admitted into a visible Society, nor communicate with it, but by visible and outward Acts, which must be performed in the Body.

So that whatever way we consider the Sacraments, either in respect of God, or of our selves, or of others, there is a necessary use
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and benefit from them, and evident Reason for their Institution. They are requisite as Symbols of our entrance into Covenant with God, or of the Renewing and Confirmation of it, and of Dedicating both our Bodies and Souls to his Honour and Service; they are Instruments of his Graces, and Pledges of his Promises made to us by Covenant, and of the Reward and Happiness both of our Bodies and Souls at the Resurrection; and are visible Marks and Evidences of our Profession, as Members of the Church, of our Admission into it, and our Communion with it.

II. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper fully answer the End and Design of the Institution of Sacraments. After the coming of Christ, and the fulfilling of the Ceremonial Law by him, it was of no longer use or continuance, the Gospel being to introduce a Spiritual Service, by teaching Men to *worship God in Spirit and in Truth*: Yet there was need of some external Ordinances or Sacraments, the Nature of Man, and the State of this World requiring them; but that they might be as few as possible, Christ has appointed but two Sacraments *as generally necessary to Salvation*, and these the fittest and most expedient for the benefit and wants of Men.

I. As to Baptism, the Reasons and Designs in the Institution of Sacraments are all visible in it. It is a very significant and apt Representation

sentation of the cleansing and purifying the Soul from Sin, and in this Men of all Nations and of all Religions seem to have been agreed. For nothing was more frequent among the *Heathens* than their Washings and Purifications; and tho' they attributed a great deal too much to them, yet the superstitious Opinion which they had of these outward Cleansings, could never have so universally prevail'd, if there had not been some Foundation for the use of them in the Nature of Things, and that is the great fitness which is in these outward Washings to excite us to purity of Mind, and to represent the great Duty which lies upon us, to keep our Consciences undefiled, which only can render us accepted with God.

And as these Washings and Purifications were common in other Religions, so the *Jewish* Church was wont to receive Profelytes or Converts by Baptism; for which Custom they alledge the command of God to *Moses*, *Exod. xix. 10.* but (i) Dr. *Lightfoot* sets it higher, and thinks it was begun by *Jacob*, *Gen. xxxv. 2.* And our Saviour, who both in his Words and Actions throughout the whole Gospel condescended to a compliance with the Customs in use among the *Jews* so far as they might be serviceable to the ends of the Gospel, was pleased to make choice of Baptism for the Admission of Persons to the Profession of his Religion, as the *Jews* used it for the Admission of their Profelytes.

Baptism

Baptism is very agreeable to the Nature of the Christian Religion, being a plain and easie Rite, and having a Natural significancy of that Purity of Heart which it is the design of the Gospel to promote and establish in the World; and it is fitted to represent to us the cleansing of our Souls by the Blood of Christ, and the Grace of Purity and Holiness, which is conveyed in this Sacrament, and the Spirit of Regeneration which is conferred by it, *John iii. 5. Tit. iii. 5.* And it being in use both amongst *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it was so much the more proper, because both had already an Opinion of the expediency of it. Christ came to abolish the Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Law, and the vain and idolatrous superstitions of the *Heathen* Worship, and yet some outward Rite of Worship was necessary to be made use of, to dedicate the Body as well as the Soul to God's Honour and Service, to be a Pledge of the Resurrection of the Body, as well as of the Immortality of the Soul, to put Men in mind of that Integrity and Purity of Life which the Gospel requires, and to be a means of conveying it, and to admit them as visible Members into the Church. And as Baptism was very expedient to be Instituted upon all these Accounts; so it had this peculiar advantage beyond any other Rite, that it was already in great use and esteem, and could seem strange neither to *Jews* nor *Gentiles*; but it had been a very strange thing to both, and very unsuitable

(i) Hebr.
& Talmud
Exercit. on
Matt. iii. 6.

suitable to the Nature of Man, if the most Spiritual and Heavenly Religion, that can be, on this side Heaven, had been instituted without any external Rite for the Admission into it; this had been to suppose the Church to consist of Angels and not of Men, who have need of Assistance from outward Objects in their highest Acts of Religion, it had been to make Men to suspect that the Body (as some Hereticks imagined) was little regarded of God, if no notice had been taken of it, at our Reception into Covenant with him; and it besides had been to contradict the Notion which Mankind have ever had of Religion, and to give the highest scandal both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

2. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is so often the subject of Sermons, and of every good Christians Meditation, that very little needs to be here said of it. For it is evident that the Elements of Bread and Wine have a peculiar suitability to bring to our remembrance the Body and Blood of Christ offer'd upon the Cross for us, to make us Partakers of them, and to be Pledges of all the Benefits which we receive thereby. And as the Eucharist was appointed by Christ in the room of the Paschal Supper, so Bread and Wine were in use among all Nations in their Religious Worship, and nothing can more fitly express our Communion with God and with one another, than to be entertained together at God's Table.

So

So that since there must be Sacraments or External Rites and Ordinances, they could neither be fewer, nor more suitable to the simplicity of the Gospel, and to the Wants of Christians, than the Sacraments of Baptism, and of the Lord's Supper are.

C H A P. XXIV.

Of the Blessed TRINITY.

I Am not here to prove the Doctrine of the Trinity from the Scriptures, but to suppose this to be the Doctrine which the Scriptures teach, and to shew that no reasonable Objection can be brought against the Christian Religion upon that Account. And indeed this was supposed to be the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and objected against by *(k)* *Heathens* long before the Council of *(k)* *Lucian* *Philopatr.* *Nice.* Which is a strong proof for the Truth and Antiquity of this Doctrine, when it was so well known even to the *Heathens*, that they upbraided the Christians with it in the second Century, and in all probability from the very beginning; for we find it then mentioned as a known and common Reproach. Supposing then this to be the Doctrine of the Scriptures, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are but one God, I will shew,

I. That

The Reasonableness and Certainty

I. That there is no Contradiction in this Mystery of our Religion.

II. That other things are and must be believed by us, which we as little understand.

III. That the Belief of this Doctrine doth mightily tend to the advancement of Vertue and Holiness, and hath a great influence upon the Lives and Conversations of Men.

I. There is no Contradiction in this Doctrine, We are ignorant of the Essences of Created Beings, which are known to us only by their Causes, and Effects, and by their Operations and Qualities; and our Reason and Senses and Passions being continually conversant about these, our Notions are formed upon the Ideas which we frame to our selves concerning the Creatures, and this makes us the less capable of understanding the Divine Essence, besides the infinite Disproportion between the Nature of God, and Humane Faculties. When we say, that God is an Infinite and Incomprehensible Being, we speak the general sense of Mankind, and no Man cavils at it; but because the Scriptures represent this Incomprehensible Being to us under the Notion of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is Matter of Cavil and Dispute. Whereas God being essentially Holy and True, we must believe him to be what he declares himself to be in the Scriptures, and he being Incomprehensible, we may not be able to comprehend it. If God be infallibly True, why do we
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not believe what he delivers concerning himself? And if he be Incomprehensible, what Reason can be given why the Divine Essence may not subsist in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? These are styled Three Persons, because we find distinct Personal Acts and Properties attributed to them in the Scriptures, and we may suppose Three Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature without any appearance of contradiction. This will be evident, if we consider,

1. The Distinction of the Three Persons in the Deity.

2. The Unity of the Divine Nature.

3. The Difference between the Divine Persons, and Humane Persons.

1. The Distinction of the Three Persons in the Deity. The Divine Nature is in Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; in the Father Originally without either Generation or Procession; in the Son, as communicated to him by the Father, not in any such way as Sons amongst Men have their Nature derived to them from their Fathers, but yet in some such manner as is best exprest to our Apprehensions by styling him the Son of God, tho' the manner of his Generation is altogether incomprehensible to us. The Holy Ghost has the Divine Nature communicated to him from the Father and the Son, not in the same way whereby the Son has it communicated to him from the Father, but in some
other

other different incomprehensible manner, whereby he is not begotten, but proceeds both from the Father and the Son. The Divine Nature is communicated by the Father to the Son by Eternal Generation, and by the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost by Eternal Procession: We have nothing further revealed to us of the Generation of the Son, but that he is begotten, or received the Divine Nature from the Father in some such way, as, for want of a fitter Word, we can best understand by the Term of Generation; and the Scripture teacheth us no more of the Procession of the Holy Ghost, but that he is not begotten of the Father, as the Son is, but proceeds from the Father and the Son some other way, and not by Generation. But as he that would Discourse to a Man born Blind concerning Light, must use many very improper expressions to make himself, tho' never so imperfectly, understood; so it is here; we have no words that are proper, but these are sufficient to teach us all which we are capable of knowing, at least all that is necessary for us to know of the Godhead.

2. The Unity of the Divine Nature. To say that Three Gods are one God, or that Three Persons are One Person is a manifest Contradiction; but to say that Three Persons are (not One Person, but) One God, is so far from a Contradiction, that it is a Wonder how it should be mistaken for One by any
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who understand what a Contradiction means. *The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not Three Gods, but One God.* For neither of these Three Persons is God distinct and separate from the rest, but they all are but One God; *One Lord (Jehovah) not Three* distinct and separate *Lords*, and so *not Three Eternals, nor Three Incomprehensibles, nor Three Uncreated, nor Three Almightyes*, distinct and separate from each other; but all the Three Persons together are One Eternal, Incomprehensible, Uncreated, Almighty Lord, God.

It is Matter of Dispute, what is the Principle of *Individuation* in Men, or what it is which causes one Man to be a different Individual Person from another; and it is still more difficult to find out the Principle of Individuation in Beings which are purely Spiritual, and have nothing of Material Accidents to distinguish them. But whatever the Principle of Individuation in Men may be, it is certain that the Consequence of it is, that two Men may exist separately both as to Time and Place, and that one may know more or less than the other, they may live at a distance the one from the other, and can never at once fill the same Numerical Place, nor is their Knowledge the same: there is nothing in their common Nature to determine them, that they should be born or die together, or that there should be any mutual communication of the
Thoughts,

Thoughts, and Operations of their Minds, much less that their Life and Death and Operations should be all the very same. So that this Principle of Individuation, whatever be assigned to be it, cannot belong to the Divine Nature, which is Omnipresent, Eternal, and Omniscient; the Existence, Knowledge, and Local presence of Men are *Personal* not *Essential*, but Omnipresence, Eternity, and Omniscience are *Essential* Attributes of God, and not *Personal*, or do not belong to each Person, as they are distinguished from one another, but as they are united in the same Essence; for they are predicated of the Father, as God; of the Son, as God; and of the Holy Ghost, as God; and not of each severally, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Ghost. Every of these *Essential* Attributes therefore cannot be numbred with the *Persons* in the Deity, but can be but One, as the *Essence* itself of the Deity is, and tho' *the Father be Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal, yet they are not Three Eternals*, or Three Individual Beings of Eternal Existence, as Three Humane Persons are Three Men of a Finite Existence. It is a Contradiction that there should be Three separate Infinite Persons; for their being separate must suppose them to be Finite, or to have a limited and confined Subsistence; and therefore Three Infinite Persons can be but One God, or One Being, which has all the perfections of Personal

nal Distinction, without the imperfection of the Division of Persons.

3. From hence appears the Difference between the Divine Persons and Humane Persons. The Persons of Men are distinct Men as well as distinct Persons, but this is no ground for us to affirm, that the Persons in the Divine Nature are distinct Gods, because the Divine Nature is acknowledged to be Infinite and Incomprehensible, and when we speak of Three Persons in it, we do not mean such Three Persons as Three several Men are. But we read of the *Person* of the Father, *Hebr. i. 3.* and of *Three, that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One*, 1 Joh. v. 7. and when we speak of Three Intelligent Beings, we can have no Conception of them, but under the Notion of Persons. We learn from the Scriptures, that there are Three Persons in the Deity, which bear that Relation to each other, which is best express'd by the Terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but the Terms of Father, Son, and Spirit, are not therefore so to be understood, as they are in Humane Relations, and the word Person is not to be understood, as it is of Humane Persons; and therefore whereas we use the word *Person*, the *Greeks* call them *Substencies*, but acknowledge that they mean the same thing under that difference of words.

And yet this is all the foundation of any pretence of contradiction in the Notion of the Blessed Trinity, that Men will needs understand the Terms of Person, and of Father, Son, and Spirit, when they are applied to God, as they do, when we speak of Men, and from thence they conclude, that Three Persons in the Divine Nature must be Three Gods, as Three Persons amongst Men are Three Men; and that the Father must be Superiour and Elder than the Son, as it is in Humane Generations. But this is all Mistake; *Adam* is stiled *the Son of God* in a sense of the word peculiar to himself, *Luke* iii. 38. God is in one sense the Father of all Mankind, and in another sense he is the Father of the Regenerate only; and when in either sense we call him *our Father*, we take not the Word *Father* in the same sense that we take it in, when we apply it to Men; and when we say he is the Father of his only begotten Son, this is another sense of the word *Father*, very different from all the former. The Relation between the Father and Son is not the same in the Nature of God, that it is amongst Men, nor are the Divine Persons such as the Persons of Men are; but these are the fittest, and the most proper and significant Terms, to express the Nature of God to us, that Humane Language and Humane Understandings are capable of. We must acknowledge that there is a vast disproportion
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and impropriety in these expressions, and that they give us but a very imperfect conception of the Divine Nature, but it is the most perfect that we are able to have of it, or that it is necessary for us to have of it in this Mortal state; and if we will but allow for the incompetency of our own Faculties to have Words and Notions adequate to the Divine Nature, and will remember that God is God, and that we are but Men, there will appear to be no contradiction in the Notion of the Trinity.

The Divine Nature is such, that it has Three distinct Principles of Operation and Subsistency, which are so described and represented in the Scriptures by Personal Acts and Properties, that we know them to be as really distinct as Humane Persons are, which yet being but One God, cannot in this respect be like Humane Persons. And whoever will oppose this Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, must prove that the Three Persons of the Trinity cannot be as really distinct, as the Persons of Three Men are, tho' they are not such Persons, as the Persons of Men. And to prove this, he must understand the Nature of God, as well as he understands the Nature of Man; for otherwise he can never be able to prove that Three Divine Persons may not be One God, tho' Three Humane Persons cannot be One Man. That they are distinct Persons is revealed, and that these

Three distinct Persons are but one God is revealed, but wherein the Distinction and the Unity of these Three Persons consists is not revealed, nor is it possible for us to understand it, at least without a Revelation. The Distinction of the Persons of Men is founded in a separate and divided Subsistence, but this cannot be the foundation of the Distinction of the Divine Persons, because Separation and Division cannot belong to an Infinite Nature. There is then no Repugnancy in saying that there are Three Subsistencies, or Three distinct Principles of Personal Acts and Properties in one undivided Infinite Nature, or that the Persons in the Trinity act as distinctly and personally, as Persons do amongst Men, but are united in one Infinite Nature, which is incapable of existing in separate Subsistencies, tho' not of acting and subsisting in Three distinct Persons, or as distinctly from each other, as the Persons among Men do act and subsist.

The Summ is, that in the most perfect Unity of the Divine Nature, do subsist the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, between whom is a real Distinction, which tho' not the same, yet is equivalent to the Distinction of Persons among Men. That there is this Unity and this Distinction, we learn from the Scriptures, but what kind of Distinction this is, or how far it is to be reconciled with our Notion of Persons amongst

Men,

Men, and after what manner it is consistent with the Unity of the Godhead, the Scriptures have not told us, and it is impossible for us to determine.

II. Other things are, and must be believed by us, which are as little understood as this Doctrine. Our Knowledge at the best, concerning Finite Things is very imperfect, which is so generally acknowledged by all Men of Wisdom and Experience, that it is esteemed a great point of Wisdom for a Man to be truly sensible of his own ignorance; and it is the Character, which *Solomon* himself giveth of the Fool, that he *rageth and is confident*, Prov. xiv. 16. But when we consider things Infinite, we are much more at a loss. That there must of necessity be something Eternal, must be acknowledged by all, who understand what is meant by the word; even those that are so *foolish*, as to *say in their hearts there is no God*, yet must believe something else to be Eternal; they must believe that there always was something, because if ever there had been nothing, there never could have been any thing. For how could any thing have been produced by Nothing? Out of Nothing it might, but then there must have been something to produce it. We can be certain therefore of Nothing, if we are not sure of this, that there is something Eternal; the Atheist himself cannot deny it, unless he be so stupid as not to know

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what it means. And yet what apparent contradictions may he fancy to himself in the Notion of Eternity? For what is Eternal can never be capable of either a shorter or a longer Duration than it always had; so that Millions of Ages hence it will not have continued longer, than it had done as many Million of Ages past. And how strange and contradictory doth this seem to be, that not only Three Ages and one Age should be the same, but that there should be no difference between one Hour or Moment, and never so many Ages in respect of Eternity. And there is no avoiding this difficulty, if a Man be of any Religion, or no Religion; let him but apprehend what is meant by Eternity, and he must own both that there is such a thing, and that he is utterly unable to explain it. Here then is an unanswerable Difficulty in a thing which all the World must believe, if they have it but so proposed to them, as to be made understand what it is. And there is no difficulty imaginable in the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, which can be pretended to be greater, than that which is inseparable from this Notion, which all must of necessity hold.

And if we do but observe it in Finite things, which are usual and familiar to us, and the Objects of our Senses every day, we Believe what we very little understand, or are capable of understanding. Our Know-
ledge

ledge indeed is so very imperfect concerning the Nature of most things, that I may almost venture to say, that if we will but be contented for the present to believe what God has delivered concerning his own Nature, we may hereafter know God himself as plainly as now we know many things here. *For now we see through a Glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.*

If it be thought unreasonable however, that such abstruse Mysteries should be made necessary to Salvation, and that we should pronounce that *whosoever will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity*, and that all who do not thus think and believe, shall *without doubt perish everlastingly*.

Let it be considered, that in all Religions, whether Natural or Revealed, there must be something believed, which is above all Humane Comprehension, and which can be known no further than in order to be believed; there can be no Faith without all Knowledge, but Knowledge, if it were compleat, would exclude Faith, which is *the Evidence of things not seen*. Knowledge may be considered either as it is *general* and imperfect; or as it is *particular* and adequate to the Nature of the thing known; we must have a general Knowledge of whatever is the Object of Faith, but if we had a particular and adequate knowledge of it, there could remain nothing of it

unknown, to be the Object of Faith. The difference between Science and Faith is, not that we are less certain of the Objects of Faith, than of the Objects of Science, but that we know less of them. For Certainty depends upon our *general* Knowledge, as that God is true; and therefore what he has revealed, is as certain, as if we saw it, or could demonstrate it in every particular. And this *general* Knowledge, which is necessary in order to Faith is, in Natural Religion, attained to by Reason, and in Revealed Religion, from Revelation. Thus we attain to such a *general* Knowledge of the Divine Nature by Rational Evidence, as to be convinced, that Infinite Power, and Goodness, and Truth, and all manner of Infinite Perfections belong to it; but we believe the Divine Perfections without any particular comprehensive Knowledge of them; in like manner, from Revelation we attain to this *general* Knowledge, that the Divine Nature consists of Three Persons in One undivided Essence, but we believe these Three Persons to be One God, without any particular and comprehensive Knowledge of so great a Mystery; for then it would no longer be a Mystery, and Faith would be no more Faith.

I would therefore ask the Adversaries of this Doctrine, whether the Belief of a God, Omnipresent, Eternal, Almighty, Omniscient, Infinitely Holy, Just, and Merciful, be

not

not necessary to Salvation? No rational Man can deny it. I enquire further, whether Infants and Idiots are obliged necessarily under pain of Damnation to this Belief? They must certainly answer, no; because none can be obliged to Impossibilities. I demand then again, whether, if one or more of these Attributes, or the Agreement of them one with another be impossible to be understood (with a *general* and imperfect Knowledge) by any who are capable of knowing and believing the rest; the ignorance of these Articles, which are above their Understandings (even as to this *general* and imperfect way of Knowledge) can be destructive of their Salvation? They must needs say it cannot, because God can require nothing impossible of any Man. And the very same Answers applied to the Cavils against the *Athanasian* Creed will be sufficient to Silence them. That Creed contains such Truths as are necessary to be believed in order to Salvation; but necessary to particular Persons so far only, as they are capable of knowing them, in order to believing them. *He that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity*; but this supposes him capable of thinking thus; for it is ever supposed and agreed in all Cases, that no Man is bound to any thing impossible; and that God requires nothing of any Man either in Faith or Practice beyond his Power and Capacity. *Whosoever will be Saved, before all things*

*things it is necessary, that he hold the Catho-
lick Faith; which Faith except every one do
keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall
perish everlastingly.* But this supposes that he
has already attained, or is able to attain to
the Knowledge which is necessary to Faith,
for no Man can hold that Faith, the *general*
Knowledge whereof he cannot attain. We
must with an implicit Faith believe all that
God says to be true, tho' it be never so much
above our Understanding; but no Man is
bound to believe explicitly any more than he
can understand so far, as is necessary to such
a Belief. He is able to understand so much of
it, as to know in general what he is required
to believe, tho' he can have no such compleat
and comprehensive Notion of it, as to give a
particular and full Account of the Nature and
Manner of Existence of that which is to be
believed by him.

And let the Articles of Faith supposed
necessary to Salvation according to Natural
Religion be never so few and plain, yet
there will still be some Men, who are unca-
pable of understanding them in any way or
measure; and then there will lie the same
Objections against those Articles of Natural
Religion, which are upon this Account ur-
ged against their Faith in the Trinity it self;
which, so far as it is required to be known
and believed, is not above the Capacity of
the Generality of Mankind; and no more is
required

required to be believed explicitly of any,
than they are capable of knowing in such a
Degree as is necessary in order to such a Be-
lief; whatever Articles of Faith be assigned
in Natural or Revealed Religion, they will
be above the Capacity of many Adult Per-
sons, and of all Infants to apprehend them;
who therefore according to all Religions
may be Saved without the actual Knowledge
of those Articles which are never so neces-
sary to others. And what may be objected
against all Religions, Natural as well as Re-
vealed, ought in Reason to be objected
against none; for there can be no force
in it.

III. This Doctrine exceedingly tends to the
advancement of Vertue and Holiness, and
has a great influence upon the Lives and Con-
versations of Men.

That God the Father should send his Son,
his only Begotten, and only beloved Son to
be Born and to Die for us, is an endearing and
amazing Act of the Divine Goodness. The
Death not of a meer Man, but of the Son
of God, Blessed for ever, in our stead, must
needs heighten our Love of God, and our
Faith and Dependance on him; our Hatred
of Sin, and our Assurance of Pardon upon
Repentance. This I have proved at large in
Discoursing of the Incarnation and Death of
the Son of God for us, and therefore shall not
insist upon it here.

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In like manner, whatever the Holy Ghost hath done, and is continually doing for us, must needs be of more weight with us, and give us quite another Notion and Apprehension of his Goodness and our own Duty, than we could have had, if we believed him to be a Creature. For unless we believe him to be God, we cannot have that devout Love and Faith, and Dependance upon him, which we ought, we cannot have that Esteem and Reverence for his Communion and Presence, which is required of us, nor that sense of the heinousness of Sin, whereby we resist, and grieve and do despite to him. That Argument of *St. Paul, what know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost?* and many other to the like purpose, would be lost, but on supposition, that the Holy Ghost is God. We can never have that Sense which it behoves us to have of our Sins committed in opposition to the Gifts and Influences of his Grace, without an acknowledgment of his Godhead. So that our Faith, and Hope, and Fear and Love is more excited and enlarged, and all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls are more disposed to the obedience of the Gospel, thro' the belief of this Doctrine of the Trinity, than they could be without it. And therefore as there is nothing absurd, or impossible to be believed in this Doctrine, so it was very reasonable and expedient that it should be revealed.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXV.

Of the RESURRECTION of the Dead.

THE *Resurrection* of our Saviour from the Dead, was that which the Apostles chiefly insisted upon in all their Discourses: For if once they could convince Men, that Christ was Risen from the Dead, they could not fail of perswading them into a Belief of all that they Taught besides. There was no other Part of their Doctrine which could seem more strange and incredible than this; and when that, which they could with so much Difficulty be brought to believe, and which could not come to pass but by the Almighty Power of God himself, was evidently and undeniably proved to them, this must give that Credit and Authority to all their other Doctrine, that it could be no longer withstood or gain-said. This therefore is the Point which the Apostles most of all urged, knowing that if they could gain this, all the rest would follow of Course, and that every Man must of necessity be Converted to the belief of the whole Gospel of Christ, who was once convinced of his Resurrection.

And

The Reasonableness and Certainty

And St. Paul in his Defence before King Agrippa puts the Question, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* Acts xxvi. 8. which implies, that it is a very unreasonable thing to think, that God cannot Raise the Dead, and that therefore there was all the Reasons in the World to believe that he had raised Christ. For there was so great Evidence of his Resurrection, and so many Men daily Witnessed it at the peril of their Lives, that if their Adversaries would but allow the thing to be possible, there could be no Doubt remaining, but that Christ was indeed raised from the Dead.

The Apostle Argues that it is a very absurd thing to say, that God cannot raise the Dead. What Reason could any Man give why God cannot do it? Or how durst any Man so limit and confine the Infinite Power of God by his own Notions and Conceptions of things, as to say that the Resurrection of the Dead cannot be effected by him? This is unreasonable and absurd in the highest Degree, and therefore it is manifest that Christ is Risen, and that there is to be a General Resurrection of the Dead, since there is no other Objection that can lie against it, but the Impossibility of the thing it self. For our Resurrection is asserted in the Scriptures, as a necessary Consequence of Christ's Resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 20. and his Resurrection

was

was so well attested, that the greatest Enemies to Christianity could not deny the Evidence of the Fact, supposing the thing possible; but they would not own it possible, that such a thing should be, and upon that account rejected all the Evidence that could be produced, as tending only to prove an Impossibility, and so not to be regarded. I shall therefore shew the possibility of the Resurrection of the Dead, and that it is unreasonable to think it incredible that God should raise the Dead.

If it be incredible, that God should Raise the Dead, it must be upon one of these Two Accounts; either because he cannot, or because he will not do it. For what God both can and will do, is so far from being Incredible, that it is a most undoubted Truth. Therefore I shall

First, Prove that God is certainly able to Raise the Dead; and,

Secondly, That he certainly will do it.

I. That God is certainly able to Raise the Dead, is a thing credible in it self, and therefore ought to be esteemed incredible by no sort of Men whatsoever, tho' they have no Knowledge of any Revealed Religion, if they have but right Apprehensions concerning God. No Man can have a true Notion of God, but he must know that God is a Being of Infinite Power and Wisdom; that he made the World, and all things therein; that he preserves and

sustains

sustains all Creatures, and that all things are wholly at his Will and Disposal, to do with them as he pleases; that nothing can oppose or resist his Will, or give him the least hindrance in any thing which he is pleased to undertake. How then can it seem incredible that God should raise a Dead Man to Life again, when he at first gave him his Life? And is it not as easie to restore it to him, as to give it him at first? Might we not as well dispute that it is impossible for a Man to be Born, as that it is impossible for him to be Raised from the Dead, if our own experience did not convince us of that, but not of this? God, who gave all that Power and Ability, which Natural Causes have to produce their Effects, may, if he pleases, produce the same Effects immediately by himself. For it is not because he stands in need of any help from Natural Causes, that he has appointed them, but because it seemed best to his Infinite Wisdom to appoint this Course and Order in the World.

And it is evident even to Natural Reason, that there must have been some who were immediately Created by God, and were not born of others, as Men are since, that there must have been some *First Parents*, some, who had no Parents themselves, but were of Gods immediate Creation, that there must have been some who were the First of all Mankind, and therefore could be born of no others. Since then Man must of necessity have

have been first formed by God himself, and not have come by a Natural Birth into the World; it is evident, that God might have made as many Men and Women after this manner as he had pleased; and he, who is the Author of our Nature, may act without it, and as much beyond and above any Natural Powers and Faculties in his Creatures, as it seems best to him. And it may as well be thought incredible, that God should at first make Man, as that he should be able to raise him up again after Death; for Death is only the End of Nature's power of working, not of the Power of God himself; who, as he originally made the Race of Mankind, so he appointed the Nature of Things, and gave it a stinted Power, which it cannot exceed; but his own Power is Infinite, and no Bounds can be set to it.

When a Man is once Dead, Nature has done with him, and can never recover him to Life again; for God ordained at first that according to the Course of Nature he should only be born, and live here a while; not that his Life should be restored again to him after Death. But he is not so confined himself, that he cannot give Life to the Dead, but has reserved this as his own Prerogative, and above any thing in Nature's Power. God, who formed *Adam* of the Dust of the ground, might have formed all

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Mankind

Mankind so, if he had pleased; and he can as easily raise all Mankind to Life again out of the Dust, as he made the first Man out of it.

And the Atheist, one would think, has of all Men the least pretence to scruple the Resurrection of the Dead, who must suppose that Mankind at first sprung out of the Earth as Plants do, by a Spontaneous Production; and for him to pretend that the Bodies of Men cannot be raised to Life again by an Almighty Power is as unreasonable, as any thing in Atheism it self can be.

When at certain Seasons every Year, we see things receive a New Life, as it were, according to the Course of Nature, we may well conclude, that if so strange an Alteration can proceed from Natural Causes, then surely God is able to effect that which is much more wonderful, and to raise even these Bodies of ours after they are dead and rotten in the Grave, to Life again. And since the Corn which is Sown in the Earth, *is not quickned except it die*, and will not revive and grow again and come to perfection unless it be first buried in the Ground, and undergo great Alterations there; it is a foolish thing, as the Apostle argues, to doubt of the Resurrection of the Dead, because we cannot understand the way and manner

manner of it. Let Men Answer all the Difficulties in Nature, and it will be time enough afterwards to dispute with them about a Resurrection; but when we are at a loss about the most common and obvious things, it must be great Presumption to deny the Resurrection, because we cannot comprehend it; when alas! what is there besides that we are able to comprehend? Will we presume to say that God can do nothing, but what we understand how it may be done; when every thing we see, may inform us that his Wisdom is Infinite, and *his ways past finding out*. Indeed if we understood every thing else, there might be some pretence to scruple the Resurrection, because we do not understand how it shall be. But when our Ignorance is so notorious in all other things, it is the height of Folly and Perverseness to think our selves competent Judges of such a Mystery as this. So far are we from being able to make any Estimate of God's Power, and so far is the Resurrection from being Incredible, because there may be Objections made about it, which may seem unanswerable; that if no other Answer could be given, this would be sufficient, that God can do more than we can have the least Thought or Conception of; and that it is no Argument that he cannot do what we cannot conceive how it

should be done, so long as there is nothing contrary to the Divine Nature in it, nor which implies a Contradiction, the Doctrine of the Resurrection would be very credible and certain too, whatever other Objections might be urged against it; which yet are not in themselves so formidable as they may be imagined to be.

All the Objections against the Resurrection of the Dead are either against the Resurrection of Bodies after their Corruption and Dissolution, or against the Resurrection of the same Bodies of Men which they had before their Death, because the parts of our Bodies are in a perpetual Change and Flux here, and after Death by several Accidents, as by the devouring of Humane Bodies by Men, or by Fish, or other Creatures, which are afterwards eaten by Men, it may come to pass that the same parts which Compounded one Man's Body, shall afterwards belong to anothers, and yet in the Resurrection they can belong but to one of these Bodies. But,

1. Bodies after their Corruption and the Dissolution of the Parts which compose them may be restored to Life by the Reunion of these Parts again. We have several Instances of this in Natural Philosophy that Bodies divided into never so minute Parts, tho' these Parts be mix'd and confounded

founded with the Parts of other Bodies, may by Chymical Operations be reduced to their former State and Condition, and which is of nearer affinity to the Subject in hand, after the Ashes of a Plant have been sown in a Garden fairer and larger Plants have sprung up than had been known of that kind in the place where the Experiment was made. And (1) Mr. Boyle thinks it scarce to be imagined *what Expedients to reproduce Bodies, a further Discovery of the Mysteries of Art and Nature, may lead us Mortals to.* And much less, says he, can our dim and narrow Knowledge determine what means, even Physical ones, the most wise Author of Nature and absolute Governour of the World is able to employ to bring the Resurrection to pass. And where the powers of Nature fail, we know that God is Infinite, and can want no means to effect whatever he pleases.

2. We may rise with the same Bodies which we have here, notwithstanding any Change or Flux of the parts of our Bodies while we live or any Accidents after Death. It is agreeable to Reason, and to the Observations of Philosophers and Physicians to believe that the Bones and Muscles and Nerves, and all the *Essential constituent Parts* of Humane Bodies are of so firm and solid a substance as to suffer little Alteration during our Lives, when once they are come to their

(1) Mr. Boyle's Consideration about the Possibility of the Resurrection.

(m) Dr. Haver's Osteolog. 2d Discourse of Accretion, and Nutrition.

full growth and proportion, but to continue the same till we die; and the Alterations which they undergo before Men come to their full Stature is by Addition of parts, not by the diminution of those wherewith we are born. It appears from a late Discourse of a (m) Learned Physician, that Nutrition is a supply of the Fluid Parts, and that the proper Substance of the Solid Parts suffers no Diminution, but in some extraordinary Cases, and therefore can stand in no need of Reparation but in such a Case. For *the whole Body is Vascular*, or made up of Vessels and Pipes replenished with their several Substances; so that in an *Atrophy* the Fibres become dry, and the Nerves and Vessels are contracted, and shrunk for want of the Spirits and Juices and Liquors which before filled and distended them. But the Solid Parts are of so durable a Substance, that they can suffer no Diminution, but by such Corrosives to dissolve them, as must produce Ulcers, and such as would affect the Fibres with so intolerable Pains, that *the Torments of the Stone and Gout would be moderate and easie to them; which in a Consumption would be Universal* in all parts of the Body; whereas there is no such Symptom in any Part; and in the greatest Consumptions the Bones are found to retain their entire Bigness; tho' a piece of Bone is sooner

sooner Dissolved by a Corrosive Liquor, such as *Aqua-Fortis*, than Muscular Fibres of equal quantity or weight.

It is wont to be observ'd upon this Subject, that when the Change of Parts is gradual, and in the course of some Years the Body may still be the same, as it could not be, if the Change were made all at once. A Ship or House remains the same tho' it be never so often repaired, and tho' the Materials in Succession of Time be all or most of them renewed: whereas if it should be taken to pieces all at once, and all the Materials should be changed, and new Materials of the same Figure and Dimensions should be exactly in the same manner framed and built up together in their stead, these would make another House or Ship, and not the same that was before.

But when the Parts which *constitute* the Humane Body, and give it the Denomination of the Body of this or that individual Man continue the same, the same Person has the same Body in his Old Age, that he had in his Youth, as truly as he has the same Body in Sicknes, which he had in Health; and the same under the Languishings of a Consumption, which he had in his greatest Vigour and Strength. For the Change is only in the variable and accidental Parts, which are not *necessary* to *constitute* the Body

(n) Sanctior
De staticâ
Medicinâ
Sect. i.
Aph. vi.
lix. lx.
Sect. iii.
Aph. x.

of such a Man; and the *necessary constituent Parts* (tho' they were changed or altered, as in some very rare cases they may be) being so few in Comparison of the rest, which make up the Bulk of a Man's Body, can hardly be supposed by the devouring of Canibals, or by any other Accident to become the *constituent Parts* of any other Man's Body. (n) *Sanctorius* from his Statick Experiments has Observed, that a very inconsiderable part of what we eat, is turned to Nourishment; and from the small proportion which the *Necessary constituent Parts* bear to the rest, and the unfitness of them, as of Bones, &c. to nourish, it may be concluded, that little or nothing of that which turns to Nourishment, can be supposed to be of those *constituent Parts*; and considering further the great Changes which happen in our Bodies in the continual Flux of Parts, and the small Proportion again, which the *constituent, or necessary essential Parts* have to the rest, we may conclude (supposing those parts as well as others to suffer Alteration) that it is the greatest odds, that the *constituent Parts* which turn to Nourishment, do not by that Nourishment happen to belong to the *constituent Parts* of the Mans Body who is nourished by them when he comes to die. So that if a Man should live wholly upon Humane Flesh, which it

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is not to be believed that ever any Man did, yet it would perhaps be above an Hundred to one whether any *constituent Part* of his Body were made up when he died, of the *constituent Parts* of any other Man's Body. And besides, it must be granted by all, that Believe a God and a Providence, that a particular Providence may take such effectual care of us as to reserve to every Man his own Body in all the *Essential Parts* of it; the *Hairs of our Heads* are all *Numbered*; that is, they are as well known to God, as they could be to us, if we had told and numbered them never so exactly; and therefore much more the *necessary Parts* of us are under his Cognizance and Care.

These *necessary constituent Parts* then being the same, God may supply the rest, as he shall see fitting; and the Body will be the same after the Resurrection, that it was in this Life, tho' the Bodies of Men at the Resurrection must arise in all the Perfection of an Humane Body, and therefore must have no part wanting: For if any part of an Humane Body should be wanting, they would not have all the perfection of such a Body, tho' they should be never so perfect in all the parts which they be supposed to have. For if a Man having but one Eye, or one Ear, should be able to see or hear with

with that one better than ever any Man did with two, yet it would still be a defect in his Body to want an Eye, or an Ear.

All the uses of any one part of our Bodies are not perhaps yet fully known, and the Dependance which one part has upon another may be such, as that it may be requisite that those parts should be raised for their Relative usefulness, which may seem to have no proper use of their own after the Resurrection. The Sight is a Sense which may be capable of Improvements beyond what we now are able to conceive, as we may conclude from the Improvements which have been made by the help of Microscopes and Telescopes. And who knows, but that in the Glorified State our Eyes shall have that perfection, as to be able to discern the Contexture and Motions, and the whole Frame of those pure, Spiritual and Cœlestial Bodies; and then those parts, which now to the naked view, and much more when discerned thro' Microscopes cause so much Admiration, will be still much more admirable to behold, when they are thoroughly seen and fully understood by us; and to want those parts which may seem to be then no longer of any use, would be to want one great Argument of our praise of God in the contemplation of his Wonderful Works.

But this is mentioned only to shew that
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an ordinary Fancy, if it be allowed to take the Liberty which some have done upon this Subject, might easily propose as probable Reasons in Defence of the Received Doctrines, as can be framed against them.

(o) The Author of *the Answers to the Orthodox* amongst the Works of *Justin Martyr*, says that some parts of our Bodies, tho' they will then have no direct usefulness, yet will be raised at the last Day, to be Memorials to us of the Wisdom of God in that use which we had of them in this Life. And (p) *St. Austin* says, that the Glory of God will be magnified, in that he will have freed those Members from the Corruption to which they were subject here. However, it ought to suffice Christians that our Bodies shall be like to Christ's Body, and therefore shall have the full perfection and proportion of all the parts constituting an Human Body, as his Body had after his Resurrection. *We know that we shall be like him*, 1 Joh. iii. 2. and as for any thing further it will be time enough to know it at the Resurrection.

II. It is not only Credible and Reasonable to believe that God can, but likewise that he will Raise the Dead. The Revelation of his Will in his Holy Word ought to put this beyond Dispute among Christians. But besides, it appears to be requisite from the
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(o) *Quæst.*
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(p) *Aug.*
Civit. Dei,
lib. xxii.
c. 17.

Nature of Man, consisting of Soul and Body, that there should be a Resurrection of the Body; it is fit that the Man should be punished that Sinned, and that the Man who lived well here, and suffered for Righteousness sake, should be rewarded for it. But if the Soul only be Punished, or the Soul only be Rewarded, the Man is not rewarded or Punished; for the Soul is but part of the Man, but Soul and Body together make up the whole Man, and therefore it is requisite that the Soul and Body should be re-united. *For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. v. 10.* For this Reason it is requisite that the Soul should be again united to the same Body; otherwise the Soul and Body would constitute a Man, but not the same Man that was before, the Body not being the same; for it must be the same Soul and the same Body that make the same Man. *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. xv. 22.* the same Body therefore that died in Adam is to be made alive in Christ; *who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, Philip. iii. 21.* Christ himself rose with

with the same Body that was Crucified, and we are to be like him at the Resurrection, and to have our Bodies Changed into the likeness of his Glorious Body. And indeed, if a New Body were assumed how could it be a Resurrection? Which implies the Rising again of that Body, which after the Separation of the Soul was Buried in the Grave; and otherwise, as it is usually argued, one Body may be punished for the Sins committed in another.

If it be said that the Body is only the Instrument of Sensation to the Soul, but is it self capable of none, and therefore must be incapable of Rewards or Punishments. It may perhaps be Answered, that this is more than can be absolutely concluded from the Notions of Modern Philosophy against the General Sense of Mankind, and the Philosophy of all former Ages. However, the Body being unable to determine it self in its Sensations, if it have any of its own. I confess I cannot think this Argument fit to be insisted upon, in as much as no Actions can be capable of Rewards or Punishments, but such as proceed from choice.

But it must be acknowledged, that the Soul may be capable of more Happiness or Misery, when re-united to the Body, than in its Separate State. For besides the Anguish, or the Peace and Joy of Mind, besides its own Reflections, and its proper Operations,

Operations, which the Soul is capable of in a State of Separation from the Body; it is capable of being affected with Sensations, which arise from its Union with the Body. And that these may be answerable to what a Man's Actions in this Life have been, the Soul must be United to the self same Body, so disposed and qualified to affect the Soul as it was in this Life, only with Infinitely greater, more exquisite and more lasting Degree of Pain or of Joy and Satisfaction; yet without any mixture of gross and sensual Pleasures in the Righteous, but only such as are suitable to Spiritual Bodies. And this Disposition of Body depends upon the Vertuous or Vicious Actions and Habits of Men here; for a Body by Vicious Practices and Customs prone to raging and furious Passions, insatiable Appetites, and tormenting Inclinations and Desires (without any thing to gratifie or assuage them) must have quite another effect upon a Soul, than a Body subdued to the mild and calm and obedient Temper of Religion and Vertue. And tho' God could by his Almighty power form another Body to that Frame and Disposition, which the Body of any particular Man was in, when his Soul departed out of it; yet it doth not seem agreeable to the Divine Goodness and purity, by his im-

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mediate power to frame a New Body to the depraved Temper and Inclinations of a Vicious Man. And we are so little acquainted with the Union of the Soul and Body, that for ought we know, a Soul can be United only to its proper Body. The Truth is, we know nothing of these Matters, but from the Scriptures, all besides is only Conjecture. But the Doctrine of the Scriptures is probable even to our Reason, tho' indeed it ought to over-rule Reason, especially in things which are so obscure, and so little understood by us. God has declared that he will raise these Bodies to Life again at the Day of Judgment; and whatever we may think of it, to him all things are alike easie, it is as easie for him to do, as to say it.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXVI.

Of the Reasons why Christ did not shew himself to all the People of the Jews after his Resurrection.

ST. Peter speaking of Christ's Resurrection says, *him God raised up the third Day, and shewed him openly, not to all the People, but unto Witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the Dead, Acts x. 40, 41.* After his Resurrection he was shewn openly, but not to all the People; he was seen in a plain and open manner, yet not so publickly, as to make all the People Witnesses of his Resurrection. The Will and good Pleasure of God is a sufficient Reason to us of all his Actions, especially in Acts of Mercy: For it would be a strange Return made but to a *Man* for any Favour received, to be captious and quarrellsome about the manner of his bestowing it, instead of being grateful to him for it. But besides this General Reason which ought to be of Force with us in all Cases, there are Reasons peculiar to the present Case, whereby we may be able to give an Account of it, even according to our own Apprehensions of things.

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I. There are Reasons peculiar to this Dispensation of Christ's Resurrection; why Christ should not shew himself to all the People, after he was risen from the dead.

II. It had not been suitable to the other Dispensations of God towards Mankind for him to do it.

III. Great Numbers of the *Jews* were given over to hardness of heart, and would not have believed, tho' they had seen Christ after his Resurrection.

IV. If they had Believed, their Conversion had not been a greater proof of the Truth of his Resurrection, than their Unbelief has been.

V. The Power of his Resurrection manifested in the Miraculous Gifts bestowed upon the Apostles was as great a Proof of his Resurrection, as the Personal Appearance of our Saviour himself could have been.

I. There are Reasons peculiar to this Dispensation of his Resurrection, why Christ should not shew himself to all the People after he was risen from the Dead. Christ after his Resurrection was to act according to the Majesty of the Divine Nature, not according to the Infirmities and Condescension of the Humane; the time of his Converse with Men was at an end at his Death, and then another method and manner of Dispensation was to begin; he was then to converse only with his particular

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Friends and Favourites, to satisfy them of his Resurrection, and to instruct and enable them both by their Doctrine and Miracles to satisfy others. It could not be suitable to the Dignity of his Majesty, which he had assumed after his Resurrection, to submit himself to the Censures of his Enemies; he had suffered enough from them already in the State of his Humiliation, and must he never be above the Suspicion and Scrutiny of their Malice? Shall not his Resurrection free him from it? When they saw him hanging upon the Cross, they cried out with upbraiding and insolent Scorn, that they would believe in him, if he would come down from thence; but neither did they deserve such a Miracle to be wrought at their Pleasure, who thus called for it, nor was it suitable to the Divine Dispensation that it should be wrought. It was neither fitting that he should save himself from Death, nor that he should appear to them after he was risen from the Dead. He was to Die for our Redemption, and as we had wanted the Argument from his Resurrection for the Truth of our Religion, if he had come down from the Cross; so if he had appeared to all the *Jews*, we had wanted other Evidence; which, as I shall shew, at least amounts to all the Proof which that could have given.

In the State of his Humiliation our Saviour was pleased to suffer himself to be exposed

posed to *the contradiction of Sinners*, and to all their Affronts and Injuries; but when *this their Hour and the Power of Darkness* was once past, they were to see him no more, but with confusion of Face and terrour of Mind; yet his Mercy was still the same towards them; one of the greatest Persecutors was converted by a Voice from Heaven, the Son of Man speaking to him from thence, that he might be the happy Instrument in the Conversion of others, and a *Pattern* to them of the *long suffering* of Christ, *1 Tim. i. 16*. But his manifestation of himself to *St. Paul* at his Conversion was with dreadful Awe and Majesty, not in that mild and gracious Glory, in which he was seen by *St. Stephen*; and it is reserved for those who persecuted and *pierced him*, to look upon him with Consternation and Anguish at the Last Day, *Rev. i. 7*.

2. It had not been suitable to the other Dispensations of God towards Mankind for Christ to be shown openly to all the People. God might work such astonishing Miracles, and strike such Terrors into the Minds of Men, as to make it impossible for any one to doubt of his Existence, or of the Truth of his Word; but he doth not all which he can do, but what he in his Wisdom sees fit to be done; he doth not use all the Means which some Men may conceit he might use, but leaves Men without excuse, and then

requires their Faith and Obedience at their peril. To imagine that Christ should have appeared promiscuously unto all, is as unreasonable, as to suppose that God should communicate himself to all alike, or that he should have spoken from Heaven to Men without the Message and Ministry of his Prophets. For when Christ was risen from the Dead, he was no longer to act like a Mortal Man, but as in his Glorified State as our Lord and King, and as God in our Humane Nature, now no longer subject to any of its Imperfections; and therefore he was no more to come himself to the People, as he had done in the State of his Humiliation, but to send his Apostles and Disciples among them, as he had before his Incarnation sent the Prophets.

3. Great Numbers of the *Jews* were given up to hardness of heart, and would not have believed, tho' they had seen Christ after his Resurrection. Those, who when they had seen our Saviour's Miracles, had vilified them, and blasphemed the Holy Ghost, by whom they were wrought, had their hearts hardened, that *seeing they might see and not perceive, and be converted*. And of this Number the Chief Priests and Elders must be supposed to be, who hired the Soldiers to Contradict and Stifle the Belief of his Resurrection with a false Story of their own Invention. The Chief Priests before had Consulted

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to put *Lazarus* to Death, when he was undeniably known to have been raised from the Grave, *John xii. 10*. So far were they from being brought to a Belief in Christ by the sight of *Lazarus*, that they fully verified that Saying, that there are some, who *will not believe, tho one rose from the Dead*. *Lazarus* was shewn openly to all the People, and lived among them for many years after he had been restored to Life again, when he had been Dead four Days; and they would not believe, tho' they saw and conversed with him, but were the more enraged at it; Christ himself therefore after his Resurrection did not vouchsafe them his presence, but used other means which were more proper.

4. If the *Jews* had believed in Christ, their Conversion had not been a greater Proof of the Truth of his Resurrection, than their Unbelief has been. Their stubbornness and hardness of heart was foretold by the Prophets, with their Dispersion, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; and the Propagation of the Gospel (according to the Prediction likewise of the Prophets) in so Miraculous a manner, not only at a distance, but in *Judea*, and in *Jerusalem* itself, notwithstanding all the Opposition which the *Jews* could make, gave as great a Testimony to it, as their Favour and Protection could have done. And therefore it was just with God rather to

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leave them to the hardness of their own hearts, than to use such further Methods with them as were unsuitable to the Divine Dispensation in the Mystery of our Redemption, and would either have only hardened them to a greater Degree, or at least would not have proved more effectual towards the Manifestation of the Truth of the Gospel.

5. The Power of Christ's Resurrection manifested in the Miraculous Gifts bestowed upon the Apostles, was as great a proof of his Resurrection, as the Personal Appearance of our Saviour himself could have been. Our Saviour shewed himself to *Witnesses chosen before of God, to be Witnesses of all things which he did both in the Land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, Acts x. 39, 41.* these Men knew his Life and Doctrine, they had been Instructed by him, and had forsaken all for him, and according to his Promise were *endued with Power from on high*, to enable them to testify to the whole World, that they had not only seen him, but had often Conversed with him after he rose from the Dead. And one of their Chief Qualifications was, that they were but a few, poor and ignorant Men without Force or Policy, without any Art or Contrivance; they could tell a plain Truth, but could neither feign nor dissemble; if they had been more in Number, the Conversion of the World had been so much the less

less Miraculous; and they were not chosen out of the Scribes and Elders who had been used to Artifices and Falshood, but had them all along their Enemies, and opposed to their Craft and Power an honest simplicity of Mind, that neither knew what belonged to Deceit, nor feared any in so good a Cause; nor were they in the least discouraged to see their own and all other Nations against them. *God had chosen the Foolish things of the World to confound the Wise; and God had chosen the weak things of the World to confound the things which are mighty, 1 Cor. i. 27.*

These Men under all Necessities, and Persecutions, and Dangers, and Torments, both Living and Dying Witnessed that they had seen Christ alive after he had been Crucified, and tho' they were but very few in Comparison of their Enemies, yet considered as Witnesses they were many; for *he was seen by above five hundred at once*, which is a vast number in any matter of Evidence; and if so many Men be not a sufficient Testimony, no number of Men could have been. That which is demonstrated but in one way, is as certain as if it were demonstrable in never so many Methods; and he who sees a thing plainly with his two Eyes, may be as sure of it, as if he had never so many Eyes to see it withal. *It is written in the Law of Moses, that the Testimony of two Men is true, or Credible, and to be relied upon for Truth,*

John viii. 17. and it is the Law and Practice of all Nations to content themselves with a small number of sufficient Witnesses in proof of the most important Affairs. And if these *Witnesses chosen before of God* spoke, and acted, and suffered, as no Men would or could have done, if they had not been well assured of what they testified, and assisted from above in preaching the Gospel; the Truth of the Resurrection of Christ is as infallibly delivered to us by their Testimony, as it could have been by the Testimony of never so many more: for all that never so many others could have done, would have been but the same thing over again, which these Men certified by *many infallible Proofs*; and what is once infallibly proved, is as certain as if all the World should agree in declaring it. It is not the number of Witnesses, but the Character and Qualifications of the Persons, and the Evidence it self in its full force and circumstances, which are chiefly to be regarded in Matters of this Nature. If but a few Men can make it sufficiently appear, as the Apostles did, by undeniable Miracles, that what they say is true, and that God himself confirms the Truth of it, they then appeal to every Man's own Senses, before whom they work their Miracles, and make every one that sees them a Witness to the Truth of their Doctrine; God himself bears Witness to it, and the *Jews* might have said in this,

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as they did in a very different Case, *What need we any further Witnesses? for we our selves have heard of their own mouths*, in the Miraculous Gift of Tongues, or seen it with our own Eyes, in the many wonderful Works which were continually wrought in the most publick manner, in Testimony of the Resurrection of Christ.

Our Blessed Saviour therefore gave as full proof of his Resurrection, as if he had appear'd in the Temple, or in the midst of *Jerusalem*, to the whole People of the *Jews*. For this had not been more effectual to the Conversion of most of them, nor more sufficient to evidence the Truth of the Gospel, than his Appearance to his Disciples was; and if the *Jews* had unanimously believed, it could not have contributed more to convince Men of the Truth of the Resurrection, than their Unbelief has done; he sent his Apostles with a Miraculous Power, as convincing as his own Appearance could have been; and all things considered, the *Jews* afford us as full Evidence in behalf of the Gospel by opposing it, as they could have done by their compliance with it. And since we have sufficient Testimony to resolve our Faith into the Divine Veracity, the certainty is the same, whether the Witnesses be more or fewer, because it depends upon the veracity of God, which is always the same, whatever the means be, by which our Faith is resolved into it.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXVII.

Of the Forty Days in which Christ remain'd upon Earth after his Resurrection, and of the manner of his Ascension.

OUR Blessed Saviour had certified his Disciples of his Resurrection in such a manner as to give them *many infallible Proofs* of it, or else it is impossible for any thing to be infallibly proved; and that which is chiefly to be considered in this matter is, that he was seen by them not once but often, not for a short time, or at a hasty Interview, but for *forty days* together, and then he performed the common Actions of Humane Life, *he did eat and drink with them*, and discoursed with them of the things relating to his Kingdom. *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, Acts i. 3.* That which I here design is, to make some Observations upon the Conversation that our Saviour had with his Disciples, during the Forty days between his Resurrection and his Ascension, and upon the manner of his leaving them, when he ascended into Heaven.

2. The Scriptures acquaint us that our Saviour was seen of his Disciples Forty Days, or that he vouchsafed them his presence the greatest

greatest part of that time which he remained upon Earth after his Resurrection. But in what manner all that time was spent with them, we are no where told; which is no wonder, if we consider how much of his former Life is concealed from us.

In the Scriptures, which are written for our Instruction, and in the plainest and sincerest manner in the World to inform us of all things necessary to our Salvation, we have nothing taken notice of, for Ostentation nor for Ornament, but many things omitted in the Life of Christ, which are thought needful in Humane Authors, to make up a compleat History. We have no more mentioned of his Parentage than was necessary to make it evident that he was descended from *David*, and born of a Virgin, as the Prophets had foretold of him. When he was born, we read that the Shepherds and the Wise-Men came to Worship him; that he was Circumcised, that he was brought to *Jerusalem* to be presented to the Lord, and that he was carried into *Ægypt* to avoid *Herod's* Cruelty, and hereby known Prophecies were fulfilled. Afterwards he was brought to *Nazareth* upon the death of *Herod*, and from that time we read no more of him 'till the twelfth Year of his Age, when he Disputed with the Doctors in the Temple. And then we are told that he went down to *Nazareth*, and was subject to his Mother, and to *Joseph*, and in general Terms, that he *increased in Wisdom and Stature,*

Stature, and in favour with God and Man; as it was before said of him, that he grew and waxed strong in Spirit, filled with Wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him, Luke ii. 40, 52. The next time we read any thing of him, is when he was about Thirty years of Age, and came to John to be Baptized.

Thus not only during his Infancy and Childhood there is little related of our Blessed Saviour, but his riper years are passed over in Silence; in all which time we may be sure that there was no Speech or Action of so Divine a Person, but what well deserved the observation of all that knew him, and was more worthy of mention in History, than all the Renowned Adventures and Exploits, or than the Wise or Witty Sayings which adorn the Lives of the Greatest among the Sons of Men. But Modesty, Humility, and a Contempt of the praise of Men were some of the great and useful Doctrines in which he came to instruct Mankind; and he could not do this more effectually than by his own Example, in leading a mean and obscure Life, little known or taken notice of in the World, 'till two or three years before he was to leave it by a Cruel and Infamous Death. He did not chuse to spend his time in places of publick Resort and Converse; and when he Disputed in the Temple, yet nothing of the particulars is mentioned. This obscure and unknown Person was to rebuke and comptroll the Pride and Vanity of the Popular Scribes and Pharisees. And

And after he had appeared in the World, very much of his Life was spent in privacy and retirement; not many of his Discourses are delivered down to us, and the greatest part of his Actions are omitted. For if they had been all written and described in their several Circumstances, many Volumes must have been taken up in the Narrative of them; insomuch that St. John supposes that even the World itself could not have contained the Books that should have been written, Joh. xxi. 25. that is, as we might express it in our Language, he did a world of things more than these, which are related of him; and in the same sense of the Word, St. James says, that the Tongue is a world of Iniquity, Jam. iii. 6. The meaning of St. John is, that hardly any words could express how many other things were done by our Saviour, besides those which he had set down. Christ might have employed some accurate Historian to compose the Annals of his whole Life with the greatest exactness imaginable; but he was pleased to be represented to the World very imperfectly by such as knew nothing of what belonged to the writing History any farther than to be able to tell the strict and necessary Truth. The Evangelists wrote his Life with the same Humility with which he lived.

And it is observable, that when St. John says that there were so many other things which Jesus did, he speaks with relation to the things done

done by him after his Resurrection, having just before given an account of what our Saviour had said to St. Peter. And so in the foregoing Chapter, when St. John has declared how our Saviour certified St. Thomas of the Truth of his Resurrection, he adds; *and many other Signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book, but these are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name,* Joh. xx. 30, 31. So that we are acquainted with no more than was necessary, of what pass'd between our Saviour and his Disciples after his Resurrection, the rest concerns us not to know; it was for their Instruction and encouragement in their Duty, and they were empower'd to teach and instruct us. We know that *beginning at Moses and all the Prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself,* Luke xxiv. 27. but we are no where told what were the Particulars of his Exposition; only we are sure that the Apostles in their Explications of the Old Testament followed the Interpretations which he had given. We read that he was *seen of them forty days, and spoke of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God?* from whence we may conclude, that the time between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ, was chiefly spent in comforting and instructing them, and in expounding to them the Scriptures concerning

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his Passion and Resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Ghost after his Ascension.

St. Paul mentions, that *he was seen by above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part were then still alive to testify the Truth of what he said,* 1 Cor. xv. 6. tho' this Particular, however remarkable, is omitted by the Evangelists; for they relate things just as they saw it needful upon every Occasion, and since they said enough to convince Men, they were not careful to say all that might be said, they were ready to die in Testimony of what they delivered, and daily wrought Miracles to confirm it; and therefore were not solicitous to lay together all the Particulars, or to put them into any exact Order and Method; they declared what they knew, and their Miracles proved it, and they depended not upon such Niceties as Humane Proofs have need of.

We may reasonably conclude then, notwithstanding the silence of the Sacred Writers, that when Christ had once fully manifested himself to his Disciples, and satisfied them in his Resurrection, the rest of the time till his Ascension was most of it spent with them in Divine Discourses for their Instruction and Comfort; such as those are which we read in the Evangelists, one of whom declares that a full account of all that pass'd between him and his Disciples was more than could well be express'd. That happy time was employ'd in pure and Spiritual Joys and Contemplations,

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in forming and preparing them for the Reception of the Holy Ghost.

As soon as *Mary Magdalen* knew our Lord after his Resurrection, she fell at his feet to Worship him, and would touch his Sacred Body, *Matt. xxviii. 9. Joh. xx. 17.* For this Reason perhaps too, as well as out of Devotion to him, that she might be able to give the Apostles the better account of his being risen again. But he forbid her, saying, *touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father,* and then sends her to his Disciples, to his *Brethren*, as he with infinite Love and Condescension styles them. He was not yet ascended, or was not then about to ascend, but to stay many days upon Earth, and there would be time enough for her nearer approaches to him; either for the increase and confirmation of her Faith, or for her Acknowledgment and Adoration. After his Resurrection Christ made himself known to his Disciples by degrees, and by several Appearances to them at distant times, in divers Places, and in different manners; he suffered them to doubt of that great Article of our Faith for a while, that he might overcome their Unbelief, and extort a Conviction from them by such means, as that no Man unless he would be very unreasonable and obstinate, should pretend any Cause to doubt of it afterwards. But when he had thoroughly convinc'd them of his Resurrection, we may conclude from what we read of his Conversing with them,

them, that from that time he admitted them to a freer and more intimate Communication with himself, and Discoursed with them in the most mild and gracious and instructive manner of all which it concerned them to know pertaining to his Kingdom, or which they were capable then of knowing, before the descent of the Holy Ghost; sometimes perhaps vouchsafing his Presence to one, and sometimes to others of them, and most commonly to them altogether, when they were assembled, as we find they generally were. And when he withdrew himself, it was because their Mortal State would not bear a constant and uninterrupted Attendance for so long a time upon their Blessed Master; and because it was requisite that they by degrees should be accustomed to endure his Absence, and to *walk by Faith, not by Sight*; and after his Ascension, the Holy Ghost the Comforter did not immediately come upon his Departure from them, but their Faith was to be exercised in the expectation of him for the space of Ten Days, and then his Promise was to be fulfilled in the fittest and most proper Season, on the Feast of *Pentecost*.

In few words, *Christ was seen of them*, says the Scripture, *forty Days*; which implies that these for the most part were spent in his Presence; and we are in the same place told how this time was employ'd, in *speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*.

II. We may observe the manner how our Saviour left his Disciples, when he ascended up

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from them into Heaven: He had before prepared them to expect his Ascension; for besides what he had said to them before his death, immediately upon his Resurrection he sent this Message to his Disciples by *Mary Magdalen*, *Go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God*, Joh. xx. 17. They were in hopes, it seems, that he would at this time have restored again the Kingdom to Israel, and did not think he would have left them, before that, which they so much desired had been accomplished. However, taking his Leave of them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father, which says he ye have heard of me. And whilst he was giving them repeated Assurances that this Promise should be most effectually fulfilled, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their sight; he was not snatch'd away from them by a swift and violent motion, like *Elijah*, and carried up in a fiery Chariot, which might dazle their sight, that they could not discern him in his Ascent, but he was lifted up and removed from them leisurely, and by degrees, they looked steadfastly towards Heaven as he went up, by a visible and easie motion, and they had a clear view of him, 'till at last a Cloud received him out of their sight. It is probable that all the Disciples to the Number of about an hundred and twenty, mentioned *Acts* i. 15. were present to behold the Ascent of our Saviour. (q) The Apostle

(q) Apud
Euseb. Hist.
lib. 1.
c. ult.

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St. *Thaddeus* declared, tho' this (as well as many other things) is not inserted into the Scriptures, that a great multitude of the Saints and Heavenly Host went up with him; we read of the Appearance of two Angels upon this Occasion, who acquainted the Disciples, that this same Jesus whom they had thus evidently seen taken up from them into Heaven, should so come in like manner, as they had seen him go into Heaven. And St. *Paul* informs us that the manner of his Coming at the last Day will be with his mighty Angels, or the Angels of his Power, *2 Thes.* i. 7. From whence we may conclude, according to the Account of St. *Thaddeus*, that the Holy Angels visibly attended him in his Ascension.

The Disciples were all much surprized at a thing so wonderful, and stood gazing up into Heaven after him, 'till they were certified not only by their own Senses, but by the Message of the Angels that he was gone from them into Heaven, no more to be expected from thence, till the Day of Judgment.

We have therefore the plainest and fullest Evidence that can be desired, both of the Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour. He shewed himself alive to his Disciples after his Passion by many infallible Proofs, he was seen of them forty days, and Converſed and Discoursed with them, tho' we are not told after what manner, and by what Intervals of time he was pleased to vouchsafe them his Presence; this being concealed from us, as very many of the

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Particulars

Particulars are of his former Life before his Crucifixion. But at the end of the space of *forty days*, whilst he was in the midst of them, he ascended into Heaven in the sight of them all, in such a manner, that they distinctly saw and beheld him, and kept their Eyes fix'd upon him in his Ascension, and a Vision of Angels besides informed them, that he is to return in the like manner, when he shall come to Judge the World.

C H A P. XXVIII.

Why some Works of Nature are more especially ascribed to God; why Means was sometimes used in the working of Miracles, and why Faith was sometimes required of those, upon whom, or before whom Miracles were wrought.

I. **A**LL the Powers of Natural Causes proceeding from God, *that* may justly be ascribed to him, *which* is wrought by them, for he works as truly by Second Causes, as by his own direct and immediate Power, in producing any Effect. The Order and Frame of Nature was Originally by his Appointment, and by his Care and Providence and Influence it is upheld; and therefore the Scriptures ascribe the effects of Natural Agents to God as the Author of them; because these can do nothing but by his Support and Influence, and the continuance and preservation of Natural Causes in the production of their Effects for so many Ages in one constant

constant Tenour is a manifest and wonderful Demonstration of the Divine Power and Wisdom.

But those things may be said more especially to be done by God himself, whereby upon some extraordinary Occasion his Power and his Will are more particularly manifested, or his Promise is fulfilled; for in those things his Care and Providence is more concerned to bring them to pass; and therefore God may employ a more than ordinary concurrence to sustain and influence the Powers of Nature that they may not fail in such Cases to produce their Effects according to their usual and settled Course.

II. Miracles are more peculiarly the Works of God, because they are wrought without the concurrence or subserviency of Natural Means. For tho' sometimes outward Means were used in the Miraculous Curing of Diseases, yet they were such as could have no effect in the Cure, but rather the contrary; as when the Man that was born blind, recovered his Sight by washing in the Pool of *Siloam* at our Saviour's Command, after his Eyes had been anointed with Clay made of Dust and Spittle. The Ointment made of Dust and Spittle was so far from having any effect towards the Cure, that it would have been much more likely to have put out the eyes of a Man that had seen; and the washing afterwards could only remove that which was so far from being a Remedy, that it must have been an obstruction to the best sight.

As many Miraculous Cures were wrought by our Saviour without any more than a word speaking, and sometimes even without so much as that,
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to shew that he had no need of Means; so when any Means were used, they were such as apparently could not tend to the Cure, and were not used as Remedies, but as Circumstances, in the working his Miracles to raise the Attention of the Beholders, to imprint what was done the deeper upon their Memories, and to give the greater Credibility to the History of his Miracles. For all matter of Fact is to be proved or disproved by Circumstances; and the more Circumstances concur in any Action, the less liable it is to Mistake or Imposture. Our Saviour therefore was pleas'd that his Miracles should always be accompanied with remarkable Circumstances, which were sometimes of one kind, and sometimes of another, the better to work upon the variety of Mens Tempers and Dispositions; but whatever outward Means was at any time used by him, it could have the Nature only of a Circumstance, and was no more proper and effectual to produce the Miracle than any other might have been. Some he touched, some he only spoke to, and others he sent to the High-Priest, that he might be a Witness of the Cure. Now the touch, the speaking, or the sending could have no effect as outward Means, but only as they were attended with an inward and Divine efficacy. But all these were considerable Circumstances to excite the Observation of those who were present at these Cures, and to preserve the Remembrance of them to Posterity.

III. Tho' our Saviour had the most absolute and unconfined Power of working Miracles at all times, and before all Persons, whensoever he plea-

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fed, yet we may observe that he sometimes refused to exercise it. For tho' he could always do his Marvellous Works, yet it was not fit that they should be always done, but then only when they might be useful and serviceable to the Ends for which they were wrought, and to his Design of coming into the World, to manifest himself by working them. And that this was the Reason why our Saviour did sometimes require Faith as a Qualification in them who came to be healed, and at other times refused to work his Miracles before Unbelievers, will be evident, if we consider, that

I. Christ had given undeniable proof of his Miraculous Power in many Instances, before he required Faith, as a Condition in such as came to him to see his Miracles, and to receive the benefit of them. When the Jews demanded a Sign of our Saviour, *Job. ii. 18.* he had wrought before them the greatest of all his Miracles, in *St. (r) Je-* (r) Com-
rom's Judgment, by casting the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. But they were so un- ment. in
reasonable as upon this very account to ask for Matt. xxi.
another Miracle: *what Sign shewest thou unto us, 15.*
seeing that thou doest these things? Whereupon our Saviour signifies to them that he would rise again from the Dead; and this was no refusal, but only a short delay of his working other Miracles; for at that very *Pasover when he was in Jerusalem in the Feast-day many believed in his Name, when they saw the Miracles which he did.* And then the first time we find Faith required as a Disposition or Preparation in Men to have Miracles wrought for their Cure, or their Conviction, is *Matt. xiii. 58.*

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Mark vi. 5. besides the rejecting of the Scribes and Pharisees, *Matt. xii. 38.* And before the time to which these Texts have Relation, Christ had Cured all manner of Diseases, and cast out many Devils, and his Fame was spread abroad throughout all the Region round about Galilee, and even throughout all Syria, *Matt. iv. 23, 24.* Mark i. 28. He had Cured the Centurion's Servant at a distance, and had restored to Life the Daughter of Jairus a Ruler of the Synagogue. Where it may be observed, that he commended the Faith of the Centurion, tho' the Cure was wrought upon his Servant; that he Exhorted the Father not to be afraid, but to believe, when his Fear or Faith could have no influence upon his dead Daughter. He had cast out a Legion of Devils at once, and permitted them to enter into the Herd of Swine, to convince even the Sadducees, if any thing could convince them, that they were Evil Spirits which he had cast out, *Mat. viii. 13.* Mark v. 9, 22. And when our Saviour's Miraculous Power had thus manifested it self upon all sorts of Persons, upon the Absent, upon the Dead, and upon others, who could neither hope for, nor desire relief of him, and this in the sight of many who were still Unbelievers, and of some who charged him with casting out Devils by *Beelzebub*, *Matt. xii. 24.* *Luke xi. 15.* it was highly reasonable, that he should afterwards require a Belief of what he had already done, and was again able to do, before he would extend his Healing Power towards Men, and that he should work no new Miracles for the Conviction of such as disregarded and disbelieved all that he had done before.

It doth not appear, that Christ ever required Faith of any before his working of a Miracle, who had not already seen him work Miracles, unless it were of his own Country-men, and of some who came to be healed. His Country-Men by their Astonishment at his Doctrin and his mighty Works, seem to shew that they had no Experience of them before, but that they were unknown at least to the generality of them, any otherwise than by Report; but there was a peculiar Case, as I shall presently prove. Those who came to him with no cavilling design, but with a desire and expectation of help from him, cannot be supposed to doubt of his Power to do that for them, which they had seen him do for others; but many applied themselves to him upon the common Report and Fame of his miraculous Works, and it was requisite that these should believe what they had heard so well attested, if they would receive that Benefit which they besought of him. But as to others, it cannot be proved that Christ did ever, in order to his working a Miracle, require Faith of them, who had never seen him work any Miracle before, though, if he had done it, there might have been sufficient Reason for it. But all besides, in whom the want of Faith is at any time alleged as the Cause, why they had no Miracle wrought upon their Account in order to their Conviction,

viction, had in all probability seen Miracles wrought by him before, which they would not believe, and that was Reason enough, why no more should be wrought for them, to be despised, as the former had been : Or however our Saviour's Miracles were so publicly and frequently wrought, that they might have seen them, either before or afterwards, though they were not done purposefully for them, when they required it. Those, of whom Christ at any time required Faith, before he would work Miracles, were either such as had some malicious and captious Prejudice against him, or such as came to be cured of their Diseases and Infirmities.

(1.) As for the Captious and Malicious, there was great Reason why they should be rejected, and no Miracles should be wrought for them. We read that *he did not many mighty works in his own Country, because of their Unbelief*, Matth. xiii. 58. But though he did not many mighty Works there, yet he did some, which indeed were not many in comparison of what he did in other Places. And there was a particular Reason why he did no more there, because it was his own Country, and they upbraided him with his mean Birth and Education ; whereupon Jesus seeing them offended in him, said unto them, *A Prophet is not without Honour, save in his own Country, and in his own House* ; and so, as it immediately follows, *he did not many*
mighty

mighty Works there because of their Unbelief. He had done many wonderful Works in the adjacent Countries, and his Fame was spread throughout all *Galilee* ; but he, who knew the Hearts of all Men, (x) saw how unsuccessful all his Works would be upon his own unhappy Country-Men, who had been so little moved with what they had heard of him, and with what many of them probably had seen him do in other Places, that they only derided and vilified him : And he, who had so tender a Compassion for all Mankind, and with great Affection wept over *Jerusalem*, could not but have such a Concern for his own Country, as to refrain the working of those Miracles, which he had otherwise designed, foreseeing, that they would only serve to aggravate their Guilt, and encrease their Damnation, till by his Resurrection he should give an undeniable Evidence of his Divine Power, and then should send his Disciples among them after his Ascension, to whom they would have greater regard, as to Strangers, against whom they had not that unjust and foolish Prejudice. For we never read, that the Apostles did any where forbear to work Miracles, because of Unbelief, but in all Places, and among all Persons they shewed forth the wonderful Works of God. But when the Works of Christ,

(x) *Non quod etiam, illis incredulis, facere non potuerit virtutes multas, sed ne multas faciens virtutes, civis incredulos condemnaret.* Hier. ad loc.

which were so wonderful, and so well known in all Parts of *Galilee*, had so ill effect upon those of his own Country: *St. Mark* says, That he could there do no mighty Work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them, and he marvelled because of their Unbelief, *Mark* vi. 5, 6. He wrought such Miracles as his infinite Goodness meerly drew from him, and then wondred at the Obstinacy of their Unbelief, which hindred him from working any more. For there are some things which God himself cannot do, not for want of Power, but because it would imply an Imperfection in him, a Defect of Power, and a Contradiction to his Divine Nature to do them. *God cannot lye, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself*, 2 *Tim.* ii. 13. *Tit.* i. 2. He can act nothing unbecoming his own Wisdom and Goodness; he cannot do Miracles, when he sees they will be to no good purpose, but will be abused to a very ill one. Yet to shew his Compassion, and to manifest that his Power was not restrained in it self, but that their Unbelief had restrained it from them, he laid his Hands upon the Sick and healed them, but did no more; for he can do nothing improper and unfit to be done.

The requiring of more Miracles, when sufficient had been wrought already, was a *Tempting* and *Provoking* of God, it was impiously to bid *Defiance* to his Power, and

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to Challenge him to do whatever they durst demand of him. Our Saviour therefore rebukes the Scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees for Seeking after a Sign, *Matth.* xii. 39. xvi. 2. But the first time, he had wrought a Miracle just before in the Cure of the Man, whose Hand was withered, and of the blind and dumb Man, who was possess'd with a Devil; and when they still required farther Signs, and being unmoved with what had been already done, they had now charged him with casting out Devils by *Belzebub*, our Lord had great Reason to refuse to work any more Miracles before such obstinate and ungrateful Men, which he saw were so far lost upon them, that that served only to render them altogether unpardonable in *Blaspheming* the Holy Ghost; and therefore he tells them, That there was no other Sign left for them, who had not yet incurred that Sin which was never to be forgiven, but the Resurrection of the Son of Man. This was a Sign which might convince the most *Incredulous*, and which denied to none, but was reserved as the last means. And several things which were done and said by Christ in private, were not to be divulged till after his Resurrection, because before they might fall under Suspicion; but *that*, and the Miracles wrought by vertue of it, would sufficiently prove whatsoever his Disciples should say of him. When they again demanded

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a Sign, he had a little before healed great Multitudes, and had fed several Thousands by Miracle in the Wilderness, and therefore he again refers this *wicked and adulterous Generation* of Men to the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.

We have as little Reason to imagine, that our Saviour should work Miracles to gratifie the Curiosity of *Herod*, Luke xxiii. 8. who hoped to have seen some Miracle done by him; or that he should expose his Divine Power to *Herod's* Contempt and Mockery, when he had so lately wrought a Miracle in curing the Ear of *Malchus*, who was so far from believing in him, that he was one of them who came to apprehend him. It was an Act of Mercy to Cure this Man, but to work Miracles only to give Men an occasion to vilifie that Power by which they were done, could be neither worthy of God, nor any Charity to Men, but it would have been unfuitable to the Character and Authority of Christ, to debase himself to a compliance with them, who used him with such Scorn and Derision, and only reviled and tempted him. *Herod* was disappointed in his hope and expectation of seeing a Miracle, and was not denied it for want of Faith: For he believed that Christ had wrought Miracles, and supposed that *John the Baptist*, whom he had Beheaded, was risen from the dead, and that therefore mighty Works did shew forth themselves in him, Matth. xiv. 2. But perceiving

ceiving him not to be *John the Baptist*, he set him at naught.

(2.) In the case of those, who came to desire his help for the Cure of themselves and others, though they had not seen any Miracle wrought by him before, yet it was reasonable that Christ should work no Miracle for them, if they wanted Faith in what he had already wrought, and did not believe him able to perform, what they would seem to expect and desire him to do. When he had given so many Demonstrations of a Divine Power, he might justly expect an Acknowledgment and Belief of it in all, that came to him, and would receive any Benefit from it. He might surely bestow his Favours and Benefits upon his own Terms; and no Terms could be more reasonable, than that those who came to ask them should really believe, that he was able to bestow them, and should apply themselves to him with an expectation to receive what they asked of him: Otherwise to come to him for Cure, was no better than to *Tempt*, to Mock and Deride him; it was to ask what they did not believe he could bestow; but they resolv'd only to try what he could do, supposing that if they received no good, yet however there could be no hurt in the Experiment.

Now can any Man think, that the Miracles, which Christ wrought, were to be bestowed upon no better Considerations than

these? Or that those were in any measure worthy to be Cured, who came with so indifferent an Opinion of him, and with so little expectation of Relief? Christ wanted no opportunities of shewing his Power; he had shewn it in many and wonderful Instances, and would do it again as often as he saw occasion, upon fit and proper Objects: But if they so little regarded what he had already done, as not to believe that he had done it, and could again perform the same, they but ill deserved what they came for; the Divine Power and Goodness was not thus to be debased and exposed, as to be employed in the Cure of Men, who asked, what they did not believe he could perform, but only thought it would cost them nothing to make the Tryal, and for that Reason made Application to him. Our Saviour therefore says to the Father, who came to him in behalf of his Deaf and Dumb Son; *If thou canst believe all things are possible to him, that believeth*; and upon that humble and passionate Declaration, *Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief*, the evil Spirit was cast out of his Son, *Mark ix. 23. 24.*

The End and Design of Christ's Miracles required, that those, who were Cured by him, should believe in him. For they were wrought with a design to convince Men that he was the Son of God, and that he was come not so much to Cure their Bodies, as

to save their Souls, and he forgave their Sins at the same time that he healed them of their Diseases, *Mark ii. 5.* And since Faith is so necessary a Doctrine of the Gospel, it was as requisite that Christ should teach this, as any other Doctrine: But how could he do it more properly and more effectually than by requiring Faith in those who came to be healed? If they would partake of his Mercy, they must qualify themselves for it, by believing that he was the great Prophet and Messias, who was then so much expected, and of whom it was foretold, that he should make *the Blind to see, and the Lame to walk, and the Deaf to hear, &c.* *Luke vii. 22. Isa. xxxv. 5.* And unless their Bodily Cure did conduce to the Cure of their Souls by Faith and Repen- tance, it would be but ill bestowed upon them, and therefore with great Reason might be denied them. And upon this Account we find our Blessed Saviour both requiring Faith in some, and rewarding it in others, to whom his miraculous Power was extended, *Luke viii. 48. xviii. 42.* And St. Paul perceiving that the Cripple at *Lystra had Faith to be healed*, immediately healed him without being ask'd to do it, *Acts xiv. 9.*

2. Faith in the Miracles of Christ is required of Men in all Ages of the World, though Miracles are ceased; and if this be Reasonable now, it could not but be fitting then

then, that those who came to Christ, should believe in him for the sake of the Miracles, which they had been certified that he had done upon others. For Miracles, when they are fully attested, are as sufficient a Ground of Faith, as if we had seen them done; and to manifest that they are so, our Saviour might require Belief in his former Miracles, of those who expected any Advantage from such as they desired him to do. If they would give no Credit to the Miracles, which were so notorious, and so abundantly testified by Multitudes who saw them done, how should others believe in Times to come, when no more Miracles should be wrought for the Conviction of Unbelievers? Might no Man be required to believe, unless he saw the Miracles himself? Then how should the Church subsist in future Ages, when Miracles would be no longer wrought, but were for great Reasons to be withheld? We must now believe upon the Account of the Miracles which were then done, and why therefore should they not be required to believe upon the Account of them, who lived at the very Time, and in the same Country where they were wrought, though they had never seen them? Our Saviour in these Instances might introduce that Method, and establish the Evidence and Certainty of those Means and Motives, whereby Faith was to be produced in Men of all succeeding Ages,
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and might hereby signify and declare, that he requires the same Faith of us from the Testimony of others, that he would do, if we had seen and experienced his miraculous Power our selves.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of the Ceasing of Prophecies and Miracles.

Prophecies are generally of more Concernment, and afford greater Evidence and Conviction in future Ages, than when they were first delivered. For it is not the Delivery, but the Accomplishment of Prophecies, which gives Evidence to the Truth of any Doctrin: The Events of Things in the Accomplishment of Prophecies are a standing Argument to all Ages, and the length of Time adds to its Force and Efficacy; and therefore when all that God saw requisite to be foretold, is deliver'd to us in the Scriptures, there can no longer be any need of New Prophecies; which would be of less Authority than the ancient ones, inasmuch as their Antiquity is the thing chiefly to be regarded in Prophecies. For if to foretel Things to come be an Argument of a Divine Prescience; the longer Things are foretold before they come to pass, the better must the Argument needs
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be. He therefore that requires New Prophecies to confirm the Old, little considers the Nature of Prophecies, and wherein the Evidence and Use of them lies; but in great Wisdom and Caution will give no Credit to the best Evidence, unless there were something less evident to prove it by.

The chief Enquiry then seems to be concerning the Cessation of Miracles; but from what has been elsewhere said, the Reason may appear, why the miraculous Power, which the Apostles received by the descent of the Holy Ghost, was not to be of perpetual continuance in the Church, but was to cease in future Ages. For the Cause and End of the Gift of Miracles bestowed upon the Apostles, was to make them capable of being *Witnesses* to Christ; and when the Gospel of Christ was sufficiently testified, there could be no longer need of such a Power, which was given to enable Men to bear Testimony to it. For what is once effectually proved by sufficient Witnesses, is for ever proved, and needs no after Evidence, if this Proof be preserved and transmitted down to Posterity. The Power of Miracles continued till the Gospel had been Preached not only *in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, but unto the utmost Parts of the Earth*; which was the declared Intention of our Saviour in bestowing it, *Acts* i. 8. And when the Gospel had stood at the Tryals, and

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conquered all the Opposition that could be made against it by *Jews, and Heathens, and Apostates* themselves; when Miracles had been wrought for several Ages, before all sorts of Men, upon all Occasions, and had extorted a Confession from the Devils themselves of the Divine Power, by which they were wrought; when the Books of the Apostles and Evangelists, in which these Miracles are Recorded, had been dispersed in all Nations and Languages, so that it was impossible that the Memory of them should be lost; whence once the Gospel was thus divulged and attested to the World, it could not be necessary that this miraculous Power should be any longer continued: Because this is the only Reason and Design why Miracles should be wrought, to awaken Mens Attention, and prepare them for the Reception of the Doctrine which is revealed, and convince them of the Truth of it.

If then it be enquired, Why the miraculous Gifts, which were at first bestow'd upon the Church, were not continued to it in all succeeding Ages? The plain Answer is; Because this Power was bestowed for the Establishment of the Christian Religion in the World, by convincing Men of its Truth and Authority; and therefore, when a sufficient Evidence had been given in all Parts of the World, of the Divine Authority of that Religion, upon the Account whereof

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these Gifts were bestowed, the Reason for the bestowing of them must cease, and the Reason why they should be bestowed ceasing, these miraculous Gifts must of consequence cease with it.

And thus it was likewise under the Law. It is observable, that we read of no miraculous Power bestowed upon any Man before *Moses*. The Creation of the World was delivered down with undeniable Certainty, and the miraculous Judgments of God in Drowning the Old World, in the Confusion of Tongues, and in the Punishment inflicted upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* were sufficient to keep up a Sense of the True Religion. But when a new Institution of Religion was to be introduced by *Moses*, miraculous Gifts were necessary to give Authority to it, and to oppose those false and lying Wonders which were in use among the Magicians in *Egypt* and other Places. In the former Ages Predictions were very frequent, and they were delivered by the Patriarchs, who were Men of unquestionable Credit and Authority, and could have no need of Miracles to confirm the Truth of their Prophecies, which were so usual in those Times; and when the Lives of Men were so long, divers Prophecies of the same Persons had been verified by the Event. But *Moses* had a New Law to deliver, and both He and the Prophets had a stubborn People to deal with, to whom the
Message,

Message they were charged withal, was commonly very unwelcome; so that till this Institution was fully settled, Miracles became necessary.

But when the Old Testament had been sufficiently authorized and established by Prophecies and Miracles, and when by the Captivities and Dispersions of the *Jews*, the Divine Mission of their Prophets became known among so many other Nations; when the *Jews* were reduced from Idolatry, which they never practised after their Return from their Captivity in *Babylon*; and when they had made numerous Conversions amongst the Heathens, then these miraculous Gifts were no longer continued, as they had been before, in the *Jewish* Church, insomuch that it became a (a) Maxim among them, that after the Death of *Zechariah* and *Malachi*, and the rest of the Prophets, who returned from *Babylon*, the Spirit of God departed from *Israel* and ascended; and for above Four hundred Years together the Gifts, both of Prophecy and Miracles, had been withheld from them, before the Manifestation of Christ. For though there were gross Errors, and dangerous Corruptions among the *Pharisees* and *Saducees*, and other Sects of the *Jews*; yet since the Truth and Certainty of that Revelation, from whence these Errors might have been confuted, had been so thoroughly confirmed; all their Corruptions

(a) Lightf. Glean. out of Exod. 5. vi. Harm. of the E- uang. Luke i. 18. Joh. ii. 18.

ruptions and Errors were not a sufficient cause for the continuance of miraculous Gifts; and the *Pharisees* and other Sects, who were most fond and zealous of their several Tenets and Traditions, yet never durst pretend to a Power of Miracles, or Prophecy; but endeavoured to support themselves upon the Authority of *Moses*, and the Prophets.

(b) *id. Fall of Jerus. §. IX. Harm. of the N. T. §. LXXIII.* What they sometimes spake of (b) the *Bath Col*, or Voice from Heaven, deserves but little Credit, and amounts but to a Confession; that the Spirit of Prophecy had failed under the Second Temple, as the *Jews* themselves

(c) *More Nevoek. Part. 2. c. 36, 41.* expressly acknowledge it to have done. (c) *Maimonides* declares, that the *Bath Col* did not denominate Men Prophets, and therefore it is not reckoned by him among the Degrees of Prophecy.

Book. 1. I have already Proved at large, that the Evidence of those Miracles, which were wrought in the Primitive Times, affords as much certainty to our Faith, as if we ourselves had seen them wrought. And our Saviour plainly says, notwithstanding his Works, which bore Witness of him, that it was not to be expected, that his own Words should be rather believed than the Writings of *Moses*. For had ye believed *Moses*, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my Words? *Joh. v. 46, 47.* And when once the Gospel had been attested by Miracles

Miracles as the Law had been, and rendered as certain to all succeeding Ages, as a constant Power of Miracles could have made it, there could be no Reason, why such a Power should be any longer bestowed. Miracles were wrought in Evidence of the Truth of Revelations made to Mankind in the Old and New Testament, not to decide any Controversies arising amongst those, by whom the Scriptures are received: For to whom the Scriptures are the Rule, by which all Disputes ought to be determined, and therefore the Gifts of Miracles were sometimes manifested among (d) Hereticks for the Conviction of Infidels, which is the true end and design of Miracles, and not to be any Note of Distinction between the Orthodox and Hereticks.

The learned (e) *Mr. Dodwell*, by an historical Account of Miracles from the Times of the Apostles through the Ages next succeeding, has shewn, that they were always adapted to the Necessities of the Church, being more or less frequent, as the State of the Church required, till they at last wholly ceased, when there was no longer any need of them. For the only end and use of miraculous Gifts is the Confirmation and Establishment of Religion, and therefore when this is once fully confirmed and established, they can be no longer needful. But it seems rather necessary that they should afterwards cease,

(d) *Ad Orthodox. inter Justin. Martyr. Oper. Respons.*

(e) *In Ireneæ. Dissert. 11. §. 28. &c.*

than that they should be continued; I mean, as to any constant Power of working Miracles residing in the Church. For tho' there may possibly be some extraordinary Cases, in which it may please God to manifest a miraculous Power, yet there is no Reason to conclude that a constant Power of working Miracles should be continued to the Church, but rather that those Gifts should cease, when Religion has been confirmed by a perpetual Course of Miracles for some Hundreds of Years together. Because

I. Miracles, when they became common, would lose the design and end, and the very Nature of Miracles. For the Nature of Miracles consists in this, that they are an extraordinary Work of God; not that they are more difficult, than the ordinary works of Nature: All things are alike easy to God, and Miracles are as easy as any thing in the constant course of Nature can be; the only difference is, that Miracles are his wonderful Work, they are more apt to raise our Wonder and Admiration, and to put us in mind of a Divine Presence. For we wonder at strange and unusual things, and suppose a more than ordinary Reason for them. But if Miracles had continued in all Ages, this Effect of Miracles would have ceased, and they would no longer have been Miracles, but a kind of different Course of Nature. For, according to the best and most accurate
Philosophy,

Philosophy, nothing in the settled Course of Nature can be performed without an immediate Influence of the Divine Power; but in Miracles this Power manifests its self in an extraordinary manner, above and contrary to the Established Laws, or Rules, which God has in all other cases prescribed for the producing Effects.

II. Men would fancy to themselves some kind of Scheme, or other, and would frame some Notions and Conceits to give an Account of Miracles; or they would imagin them to return of Course at certain Periods, or upon some Accidents, if they saw them frequently done, or perhaps they would suppose them to proceed from some Defect in the Nature of Things, which could not always keep its course, but made many Deviations from it. But when Miracles were wrought only in some Ages for peculiar Reasons, this shews that they were done by an immediate Divine Power, with a particular Design, which could be no other, than the Confirmation of Religion, since they ceased both under the Law and the Gospel, when both were fully declared and confirmed.

III. A perpetual Power of Miracles in all Ages would give occasion to continual Impostures, which would confound and distract Mens minds, and would make the true Miracles themselves suspected. We see

now that the Dreams of every Enthusiast, and the Pretences of every Impostor are apt to startle weak minds, tho' we have so much Reason not to expect Miracles, or Revelations. But if we were in constant expectation of True Miracles, the False would be much more likely to mislead many, and to make others reject the Belief of any Miracles at all.

If Prophecies and Miracles had been frequent in the *Jewish* Church to the coming of our Saviour, his Prophecies and wonderful Works had not so well distinguished and manifested him to be the Christ. But when after so long an Intermission, they were again revived in him, this shewed him to be the great Prophet and *Messias* who was expected. And it is very observable, that as Miracles had been discontinued for a long time among the *Jews*; so St. John Baptist, who was more than a Prophet, and one of the greatest of all the Men that had been before him; yet wrought no Miracles, that he might be the better distinguished from the *Messias*, and that there might arise no doubt in the Minds of any, which of them was the Christ. And when our Saviour had been acknowledged to be the Christ in all Parts of the World, it was fit that Miracles should cease, to preserve the Authority due to the Miracles wrought by himself, and his Disciples, it being more for the Honour of Christ,

Christ, that the Miracles wrought in his Name should cease, when his Religion had been fully Established, than that Men should be tempted to doubt who was the true Christ, and which was the true Religion, upon the account of false Miracles wrought in opposition to the True.

IV. Another Reason why the Gift of Miracles has been with-held in latter Ages may be this; because since there has been a general depravation of Manners among Christians, it would have proved a great occasion of Pride and Vain-Glory to those who had possessed it, as we find it was to some even in the times of the Apostles, *1 Cor. xii. xiv.* And our Saviour saw it requisite to give Caution to his Disciples, *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven, Luke x. 20.* It must be an eminent and truly Primitive Piety, that could bear the having of such Gifts with an humble and Christian Temper of Mind.

V. It is an Observation of (f) my Lord (f) *Advan. Bacon's*, That there was never Miracle wrought ^{of Learn.} by God to Convert an Atheist, because the Light ^{1. iii. c. 2.} of Nature might have led him to confess a God: But Miracles are designed to Convert Idolaters, and the Superstitious, who have acknowledged a Deity, but erred in his Adoration; because no Light of Nature extends to declare the Will

and true Worship of God. For the same Reason, when once the true Religion is confirmed in such a manner, as to have the same Evidence for it, which there is for the Existence of God himself, Miracles are no more to be expected to convert an Infidel, than to convert an Atheist. Among Men of Learning and Reason there ought to be no more doubt of the Truth of the Gospel, than of the Being of a God, and they without the help of Miracles may instruct others. (g) *Acosta* enquiring into the Cause, why Miracles are not wrought by the present Missionaries for the Conversion of Heathen Nations, as they were by the Christians of the Primitive Ages, gives this as one Reason, because the Christians at first were ignorant Men, and the Gentiles learned; but now on the contrary all the Learning in the World is employ'd for the Defence of the Gospel, and there is nothing but Ignorance to oppose it; and there can be no need of farther Miracles in behalf of so good a Cause, when it is in the Hands of such able Advocates, against so weak Adversaries.

(g) De Procur. Indor. Salute. Lib. ii. c. 9.

However, though there be no such change as was wont formerly to be wrought in the visible Course of Nature, in Confirmation of our Religion, yet there is still a Divine Power evident among Christians living in Heathen Countries. For the Devil, who tyrannizeth over the Heathens, has no Pow-

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er over Christians dwelling among them; of which the *Indians* have taken great Notice, and have (b) declared the Christians happy in being freed from the Tortures of Wicked Spirits, by which they find themselves often seized on the sudden in a terrible manner, and stand in perpetual fear of them. (i) Christians, they do acknowledge, have a Prerogative above themselves, and not to be under the Power of these Infernal Spirits. It is so generally related by Travellers of all Professions, both Protestants and Papists, that the Devil exercises a manifest Tyranny over the Heathens, but is able to do nothing to the Christians abiding amongst them; that this cannot be denied to be a plain Argument of a Divine Power discovering it self in Confirmation of the Christian Religion, though not by such Miracles as were formerly wrought, because there is no longer any need of them.

(b) Leri Histor. Navig. in Brasil. c. 16.

(i) Capt. Knoxe's Hist. of Ceylon, Part iii. c. 4.

C A H P. XXX.

Of the Causes why the Jews and Gentiles rejected Christ, notwithstanding all the Miracles wrought by Him and his Apostles.

THough the Christian Religion be most certain in it self, yet there is a Supernatural Grace required to make us thoroughly and effectually convinced of the certainty of it. *No Man can come to me, says our Saviour, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and this is declared to be the Reason of the Infidelity of such as were offended at his Doctrin, and departed from him. But there are some of you that believe not: for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not; and who should betray him; and he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no Man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father, John vi. 64, 65.* So that the Belief of the Gospel is stiled a *Divine Faith*, not only in respect of its Object, but of its efficient Cause. In attaining to the Knowledge of the Truth of Religion, we must proceed upon the same Principles of Reason, by which we proceed in attaining to the Knowledge of any other Truth. But Reason,

Reason, when it comes up to the Evidence even of Demonstration, though it satisfies the Understanding, yet doth not necessarily gain that firm and lasting Assent of the Will, which is required in Faith; but when the thing proved to be true, is unacceptable, against the Inclinations of the Will, and against the former Opinions and Persuasions of the Understanding, the present Convictions of the Understanding are soon stifled and overpowered by the prevailing Force of the Will and Affections, which carry the Mind off to other and contrary Objects, which it has been wont to think of and believe. Thus it was in the *Academicks* and *Scepticks*; they could not but have the same sense of Mathematical Demonstrations, and other clear Truths, which the rest of Mankind have, whilst they thought of them, and attended strictly to them: But by a constant Practice to amuse themselves with Subtilties, they had wrought themselves to a Persuasion, that nothing could be certainly known to be true; and this general and habitual Opinion soon stifled the Evidence of any particular Truth, which could be represented never so clearly to their Minds.

To as many therefore as lay under long and violent Prejudices, by reason of their former Opinions, and of their Pride and Vanity in contending for them; or by reason of any of those Lusts, which are so

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contrary to the Purity of the Gospel; to such, an extraordinary and miraculous Power of Grace was necessary to establish them in the Faith, or else, though they believed for the present at the sight of some Miracle, yet this was no lasting or well-grounded Faith, *John ii. 23, 24.* And that Grace, which was necessary to their Faith, was denied to some for their Sins, *that they should not see with their Eyes, nor understand with their Heart, and be converted, John xii, 40.* So that Men of great Learning and worldly Wisdom might still continue Unbelievers, and not submit to all the Evidence of the Gospel, because the Doctrine of the Gospel being so contrary to their Habitual Thoughts and Inclinations, there was something necessary to convert the Will and Affections, and to subdue the former Habits which had been rooted in their Minds by frequent Acts and length of Time, and which were too strong for any Convictions of the Understanding, that consisted but in transient Acts, and were soon lost and vanished, through the prevailing contrary Habits both of the Understanding, and Will, and Affections. And therefore Faith must necessarily be an effect of Grace as well as of Reason; and where, because of former Sins and Provocations, this Grace was not vouchsafed, there could be no Faith, though there might be some transient Convictions of Mind, some faint

faint Glimmerings, which were soon damped and extinguished, being overpowered by former contrary Persuasions. And for the same Reason, those who had less Wisdom and Knowledge, but were not under the Power of Habitual Lusts and Passions, and therefore were more easily persuaded to any thing, of the Truth whereof they were once convinced, were likewise the more easily converted.

The Causes why the Word became unfruitful, and so little prevailed with many Men, are in the Parable of the Sower declared to be either inconsiderate Negligence and Ignorance, and the Advantage taken from thence by Satan, or want of Constancy in Times of Tribulations and Persecutions, or the Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Lusts of other things, *Matth. xiii. 18. Mark iv. 9.* It was next to an impossibility for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God, or to become a Christian. They were not Natural so much as Moral Accomplishments, not so much Parts and Learning, as an honest and humble Mind, which were the requisite Qualifications for Men to become Christians: Because as God the more freely bestowed his Grace upon Men thus qualified, so they were the better disposed to be wrought upon by it; whereas others, though they wanted a greater measure of Grace, yet had less vouchsafed to them. For *God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble.* Thus

Thus much in the General, I now proceed to give a particular Account of the Causes of the Unbelief both of the Jews and Gentiles.

I. Since there is so great Evidence, that our Saviour is the true Christ, it may seem a wonderful and almost an incredible thing, that the Jews should so generally reject him, notwithstanding all the Means and Opportunities which they had above other Nations of being converted. But,

1. The Jews and Profelytes were converted in vast Numbers. Besides the Shepherds, *Simon* and *Anna* the Prophetess acknowledged and adored our Saviour in his Infancy, as the true *Messias*, *Luke* ii. 25, 36. and it is probably (k) supposed that this was *Rabban Simeon*, the Son of *Hillel*, and Father of *Gammaliel*. The Title of *Rabban* was the highest of all Titles, signifying a Prince rather than a Doctor or Teacher, as *Rabbi* doth; and there were but Seven of the Posterity of *Hillel* who were dignified with it. *Nicodemus*, *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, and many others of Note and Eminency received the Christian Faith. About Three Thousand were converted at one time, *Acts* ii. 41. Great Numbers were converted not only of the People, but of the Priests also, *Acts* vi. 7. All that dwelt at *Lydda* and *Saron*, *Acts* ix. 35. Many of the Jews and Religious Profelytes followed *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* xiii. 43. At *Iconium* a great

(k) Buxtorf. de Abbrev. Hebr.

multitude

multitude of the Jews believed, *Acts* xiv. 1. *Crispus*, Chief Ruler of the Synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his House, *Acts* xviii. 8. And *Sosikenes*, another Chief Ruler of the Synagogue, *Acts* xviii. 19. 1 *Cor.* i. 1. *Apollos* an eloquent Man, and mighty in the Scriptures, was a Christian, *Acts* xviii. 24. Many Thousands (or Myriads in the Greek) *Acts* xxi. 20. And the number of them which were sealed, was an Hundred and forty and four thousand of all the Tribes of the Children of *Israel*, *Rev.* vii. 4. The People were generally well-disposed to receive the Gospel; and when the Chief Priests and Rulers would have Persecuted our Saviour and his Apostles, they were often forced to desist for fear of the People. And if the Apostles did not depart (l) from *Jerusalem* in the space of Twelve Years (as there is Reason to believe) the number of Converts in all that time must needs be extremely great. The Church of *Jerusalem* flourished exceedingly from the Beginning, and the Bishops of that City were of the Nation of the Jews for (m) Fifteen Successions, even to the final destruction of it by *Hadrian*. Many of the Rulers being converted, the Scribes and Pharisees made their Complaints that the whole City of *Jerusalem* would turn Christians, as (n) *Hegeippus* informs us; and the Pharisees said of our Saviour, when he was upon Earth, Behold the World is gone after him, *John* xii. 19. The Epistles of *St. Peter* and

(l) Euseb. Hist. lib. V. c. 18

(m) Id. lib. IV. c. 5. Sulp. Sever. lib. II. c. 45.

(n) Euseb. ib. lib. II. c. 23.

and St. James, and that of St. Paul to the Hebrews, purposely directed to the Jews and Israelites, shew that their Conversions were very numerous both in Judæa and in other

(o) Euseb. Hist. lib. III. c. 35.

Countries. (o) Eusebius takes particular notice of the Multitudes of Believing Jews in the Bishoprick of Jerusalem, when Justus the

(p) See Mr. Thornd. of the Primit. Government of Churches, c. 5. and Dr. Hammond on St. John Epist. 2. and Rev. xi. 3.

Third Bishop succeeded to that Sec. And (p) at Antioch, and Rome, and Ephesus there was one Bishop of the converted Jews, and another of the Gentiles, and, as

Dr. Hammond supposes, at Jerusalem likewise, but there is little Proof of it. And some of the most Learned Jews have been converted not only in these Times, but in latter Ages. Epiphanius was brought up in the Jewish Religion, as the Greek Menology testifies, and he acquaints us, that (q) Ellel the Jewish Patriarch sent for a Bishop to Baptize him upon his Death-Bed. Samuel Morobianus, Petrus Alphonsus, Paulus Burgensis, Nicolas de Lyra, Petrus Galatinus, Tremellius, and other Learned Men educated in the Jewish Worship, upon their Conversion have been eminent Defenders of the Christian Religion. Hieronymus a S. Fide, after his Conversion, is said to have brought over many Thousands to Christianity.

(q) Epiphani. Hær. 30. n. 4.

And the Samaritans as well as the Jews believed, and were baptized both men and women, even Simon Magus himself, Acts viii. 12, 13.

2. Many,

2. Many even among the Chief Rulers were convinced that Jesus is the Christ, who durst not own him, Job. xii. 42. 43. But the Love of Riches, and the Praise of Men, made them dissemble their Convictions, and Act against their Consciences, as we see too many amongst us Act against their own Knowledge, and avowed Principles, every day.

3. Many had Blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and thereby rendered themselves incapable of the Mercies of the Gospel; and others by their other great Impieties, had brought them to such an Impenitent state; that their Eyes were blinded, and their hearts hardened, that they should not see with their Eyes, nor understand with their Heart, and be converted, Job. xii. 40. Act. xxviii. 25. Rom. xi. 8. And this seems to have been one Reason, why Christ commanded his Disciples to conceal his Person, and to say nothing of his Transfiguration till his Resurrection, Matt. xvi. 20. xvii. 9. that he might discover himself by degrees, and that the Jews might gradually be prepared to Acknowledge him, and not Sin, beyond all possibility of Conversion, before his Resurrection, and the manifestation of the Power of the Holy Ghost in the Apostles, which was the last means of Salvation, and those, who rejected this, were Self-condemned, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, Act.

Act. xiii. 46. or, in effect, they denounced the Sentence of Damnation against them.

4. The Jews had violent Prejudices against the Gospel out of Zeal to their Law, and to their Traditions, which were in so much Esteem and Veneration amongst them, they feared that their Believing in Christ might prove an occasion to the Romans to come and destroy them. *If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our Place and Nation,* Jo. xi. 48. And to prevent this, the Chief Priests, and the Pharisees, in Council agreed to the Expedient proposed by Caiaphas, of putting Christ to death, imagining that would effectually put a stop to the spreading of his Doctrine among the People, who, above all things, could not endure to hear of Christ Crucified; for they had general and earnest Expectations of a temporal *Messias*, whom not only their own carnal Hearts inclined them to hope for, but their Religion, as they imagined, commanded them to expect. And the Family of the famous *Hillel* being in so much Power and Authority at that time, might be a great inducement to them, to confirm them in their hopes, and to harden them against the Belief of a Crucified

() Lightf. *Messias*. For (f) *Hillel* himself held the Government, or Presidentship, of the *Sanhedrim* Talmud. Forty Years, and his Son and Grandsons after him in a continual Succession, for an Hundred

Hundred Years before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*: So that the Splendor and Pomp of this Family of *Hillel*, says Dr. *Lightfoot*, had so obscured the rest of the Families of *David's* Stock, that perhaps they believed, or expected the less, that the *Messias* should spring from any of them; and one of their *Rabbins*, in the *Babylonian Gemara*, was almost persuaded, that *Rabbi Judah*, of the Family of *Hillel*, was indeed the *Messias*. They were all very unwilling to find him in so low and afflicted a Condition, when the Lustre of this Family had for so long a time attracted their Sight and Expectation; inso-much that *Rabban Simeon*, the Son of *Hillel*, is but slightly mentioned, and not with that *Encomium*, with which the rest of that Family are wont to be Celebrated by the Jewish Writers; for this Reason, (g) if *Bunob* be (g) *DeAb-* not mistaken, because he was the same *Sime-* ^{brev.} *on* who declared our Saviour to be the Christ. ^{Hebr.}

Tho' the Jews must have been convinced (if they would have attended to them) by all manner of other Means and Evidence, that Jesus was the *Messias*, yet they esteemed Temporal Pomp and Grandeur so essential to the Person and Character of the *Messias*, that they thought the meanness of our Saviour's Condition, and the Ignominy of his Death, was sufficient to overthrow all the Arguments which they could possibly have, of his being the Christ; indeed their Minds

were so fixt upon this mistaken Indication, that they little regarded any other.

This bred in them that Ignorance, which was truly very culpable, but which yet was taken notice of in their Favour, as some mitigation of so heinous a Crime, as the Crucifying of the Son of God, Luke 23. 34. Act 3. 17. 13. 27. 1. Cor. 11. 8. But with all it made them exceeding obstinate, and Deaf to all the Arguments, that could be offered to convince them. When St. Stephen had answered their Accusations, and fully argued the case with them, *they gnashed on him, with their Teeth, and cried out with a loud Voice, and stoppt their Ears, and ran upon him, and stoned him* Act. 7. 54 57. And when St. Paul had declared in all Particulars how he was converted, and appealed to the High Priest, and to the Estate of the Elders, for the Truth in part of what he related; yet the People in a Rage and Tumult lift up their Voices, and said, *Away with such a Fellow from the Earth, for it is not fit that he should live; they cried out, and cast off their Clothes, and threw dust into the Air,* Act. xxii. 22. 23. These are not the Actions of Reasonable Men, no wonder therefore, that they were not convinced by Reason.

5. *False Christs and false Prophets, with their Signs and Wonders, were then very frequent, insomuch that if it had been possible, they would have deceived the very Elect,* Matt.

xxiv.

xxiv. 24. And the Jews were much more enclined to give Credit to these, who complied with their Lusts and Desires, than to examine and consider the clearest Evidence, which must oblige them to take up the Cross, and follow a Crucified Saviour. The Cross of Christ was *to the Jews a stumbling Block*, and they would believe any thing rather than it.

6. Upon these and such like Causes, the Jews rejected their *Messias*, and still continue in Unbelief, whereby are fulfilled many Prophecies concerning this very thing, and whilst they endeavour in vain to disprove all other Arguments, their Infidelity and Obstinacy it self is an Argument against them, the Prophets having foretold that they would thus reject their *Messias* as St. Paul proves, Rom. ix. 27. And it was no new, or strange thing, that the Jews should resist the Holy Ghost, they always did it, as St. Stephen tells them, *as your Fathers did, so do ye: Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? And they have slain them, which shewed before of the Coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the Betrayers and Murderers,* Act. vii. 55, 52.

II. What great Numbers of the Heathen Nations, in all parts of the World, were converted to the Christian Religion, is evident both from Christian and Heathen Authors of those Ages, in which the Gospel was

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first Preached; and considering the general Depravation both of the Manners and Principles of those Times, it is no wonder that many should be contented with any Religion, or with no Religion at all, so that they might retain their Vices, rather than attend to any Arguments, which could be brought in proof of a Religion, that must oblige them to abandon and Crucify all their Lusts and Sins, and renounce their Ease and Safety, to live in Disgrace and Misery, and die in Torments. However, notwithstanding all these Discouragements, there was no Rank, nor Order of Men, nor Sect of Philosophers, but divers of the best and wisest of them were early Converts to the Christian Faith, such as *Dionysius the Areopagite; Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Arnobius*, and others. And as nothing but the clear Evidence and Force of Truth could convert these, so it is no unaccountable thing, that others should stand out and oppose it. For

I. *The Greeks sought after Wisdom*; they were only for high and Subtil Speculations, and were so possess'd with their own Notions, and a Conceit of themselves, that they would give no Attention to a Company of ignorant Men, who told them a plain Truth of one, that had been Crucified, and Rose again from the Dead. *Christ crucified was unto the Jews a Stumbling-Block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 22. 23.* And

And the several Tenets of Philosophy then in Vogue, were a great obstruction to all such, as thought themselves skilled in them, to hinder them from becoming Christians; and we find that some of them after their Conversion could not soon lay aside all their Philosophical Notions. The *Epicureans*, a confident and vain Sect, would receive nothing that could be said to them of a Resurrection and another Life, but with Scorn and Contempt: *And some said, What will this Babler say? And when they heard of the Resurrection of the Dead, some mocked, Acts xvii. 18, 32.* The *Platonists* held a Revolution of all Things into their former State, in some certain Term of Years, and therefore they by their own Principles must look upon all only as a Consequence of such a Revolution and a Period of Time. The *Peripateticks* were persuaded, that the World is eternal, and therefore laugh'd at those who seem'd to them to teach that it was now just at an end, and declared that it had a Beginning not many Thousands of Years before. The *Stoicks*, who mightily improved the Moral Part of Philosophy, by borrowing from the Christian Doctrin, yet holding that all Things are under an inevitable Fate and Destiny, had such a perpetual curb upon them, as left them no Liberty to think of changing their Opinions; one of which was that there is nothing Immaterial,

a plain Contradiction to the Fundamental Doctrins of the Christian Religion.

(t) Arrian. Epist. lib. III. c. 22.

Besides there was a great deal of Pride in the very Composition of a *Stoick*. It (t) appears from the Account which *Arrian* has given of *Epictetus*, that neither the Jewish Law, nor the Christian Religion was unknown to him; for in the Discourses which he has preserved of *Epictetus*, we find him sometimes using the same words with the Scriptures. But it appears likewise from those Discourses, that *Epictetus* was a great Admirer of *Diozenes* the Cynick, and imitated him in his Pride and Haughtiness. For, magnifying himself as one sent by God to be an Example to the World, and to prove that the high Sayings of the *Stoicks* are not vain Boasts, but real and practicable Truths, he at last thus concludes, "How do I converse, says he, "with these Men, whom you fear "and admire? Do not I treat them as "Slaves? Who, when he sees me doth not "think he sees his King and his Master? There could be little hope, that such a Man should be wrought upon by a Religion which enjoineeth, That *in lowliness of mind each esteem other better than themselves*, Phil. ii. 3.

(u) --Prope est a te Deus, tecum est, inus

(u) *Seneca* in some places, writes as if he had been transcribing the Scriptures, but he est. Ita dico, Lucili, sacre intra nos spiritus sedet, bonorum, malorumque nostrorum observator & custos, &c. *Senec. Epist. 41.*

is not always the same, and he likewise discovers a strange Vanity and Conceit of himself and his own Writings. For citing a Passage of *Epicurus*, where he told his Friend, That if he desired Glory, his Letters should make him more famous than all those things which he esteemed, or for which he was esteemed. (a) *Seneca* assures *Lucilius*, That (x) *Epist.* he could promise him as much as *Epicurus*²¹ had done his Friend: For he should be Famous in future Times; and could raise and perpetuate the Fame of whomsoever he pleased.

The *Pythagoreans* were a superstitious Sect, and were apt to ascribe all to Magick; and besides they had given themselves up by a blind Obedience to their Master's Dictates, and therefore were to regard no Reasons nor Arguments against them. In short, the Philosophers were all exceedingly prepossessed and prejudiced by some peculiar Opinions of their own, besides the general Prejudices, which they lay under with the rest of the World. And all Men of any Learning and Education studied the Books of the Philosophers, and were commonly addicted to one Sect or other.

It must be confessed, that Vanity and the Praise of Men was the chief aim of many of the Philosophers, as *Tertullian* and others of the Fathers object, and therefore they were very unlikely to become Prote-

lytes to a Religion, which was looked upon in the World with such Disdain and Contempt. Philosophy in general, if we believe

(y) Instit. lib. I. c. 1.

(z) Contra Cels. lib. II.

(a) Ib. lib. I.

(b) Philip. Sider. apud Dodw. Append. ad Dissert. in Irenæ. e. Cod. MS. Baroc.

(c) Euseb. contr. Hier. & Lactant. Institut. lib. V. c. 2, 3. De Mortib. Persecut. c. 16.

(y) *Quintilian*, was in his time by most used as an Artifice and Disguise to conceal the worst of Vices under a morose Look, and a Habit different from that of other Men. And from such Philosophers as these we must expect that the Scriptures should be read with no manner of Candor, or good and serious Intention. (z) *Origen* gives Instances of the wilful Abuse of the Scriptures by some of his Time, who cavilled at half Sentences, without taking notice of the Coherence which they have of the rest. And he complains that (a) *Celsus* seemed never to have read the Scriptures, though he pretended to a very exact Knowledge both of the Jewish and Christian Religion, but understood little

of either. (b) *Athenagoras*, who before him had read the Scriptures with more care and sincerity, tho' with the same Design, became converted, and wrote in Defence of that Religion which he intended to oppose. (c) *Hierocles* likewise had read the *New Testament* with a design to write against it, but he who could believe the

Miracles of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and prefer that notorious Impostor to our Blessed Saviour, and *Maximus Aegienus*, *Damis* the Philosopher,

and

and *Philostratus* to *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, shews so strange a partiality as might be expected only in him, who opposed the Christian Religion by his Persecutions more than by his Arguments; for *Hierocles* was the chief promoter of the Persecution under *Dioctetian*.

2. The Gentiles looked upon the poor persecuted Condition of the Christians as an Argument against their Religion, and were not only prejudiced against a New Religion which must expose them to Sufferings, by that fondness which Men naturally have for their own Ease and Safety, but (d) when they saw the Christians in Distress they would upbraid them, as the Psalmist's Enemies reproached him, saying, *Where is now thy God?* They considered their own Religion as the Religion of their Country, and of their Ancestors, which was what *Tully* said for it, when he ruined all the Grounds and Pretences in behalf of it. They alleged that this had been the Religion of their Forefathers, and that the *Roman Empire* had arrived to so much Power and Greatness under its Influence. This was so much insisted upon, as is to be seen in *Zosimus*, *Symmachus* and others, that *Orosius* set himself to answer it in a particular Work, and *St. Austin*, who put him upon Writing it, thought himself concerned in his own Works to oppose so unreasonable, but fatal a Prejudice.

(d) Aug. Civit. Dei lib. I. c. 29.

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3. The Consequence of these Prejudices against the Christian Religion, both in Favour to the Religion of their Country, and in Fondness for their old Opinions, and out of an Abhorrence of Afflictions, and a Disregard of those, who were so much exposed to them, as having but small pretence to any part of the Divine Care; the Consequence, I say, of these Errors and Prejudices was, that the Gentiles despised the Christian Religion before they understood any thing of it. For many Men of Learning and Observation were so little acquainted with it, that they did not distinguish Christians from

(e) Sueton in Claudio, c. 25.

(f) Nam nec Nominis certa est notitia penes eos. Tertul. Apol. c. 3. Sueton. ib. Lactant. Lib. IV. c. 7

Jews, as we see by (e) Suetonius. They knew not so much the true Pronunciation of the Name of *Christ*, or *Christian*, but were wont to write (f) *Chrestus* and *Chrestianus*. This the *Apologists* much insist upon, that they condemned and persecuted what they did not understand, the Christians desired no more than a fair Hearing, and if they might but be suffered to make their Religion fully known to their Adversaries, they begged no further Favour.

(g) Aug. de Civit. Dei, Lib. XVIII. c. 53, 54.

4. It was believed (g) that the Heathen Oracles had delivered, that the Christian Religion should continue no longer than Three hundred and sixty five Years, and it is observable that *Julian* the Apostate died

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A. D. CCCLXV. according to some Chronologers, tho' others place his Death Two Years before. It seems the Devil had some great Expectation from his Reign, but at or near that very time, in which he had foretold that the Christian Religion should have an end (if the Computation were to be made from the Nativity of Christ) he saw an end of all his hopes in the Death of that Emperor, who was so zealous in his Service, and had given out severe Threatnings against the Christians of what they were to expect, if he had returned victorious from that Expedition in which he perished. And this Prediction had respect probably to his Reign, though the *Greek Verses* in which it was delivered might be altered afterwards, or so contrived at first, as to extend it to a longer time, leaving it uncertain from whence the Calculation was to begin. However this Oracle kept many of the *Gentiles* from being Christians, till they saw the time past, which they supposed to be meant by it, as *St. Austin* assures us.

5. The Heresies and Schisms which soon arose in the Church, gave great Scandal and Offence to such, as judged of these things at a distance, and in the gross, without examining into the Occasions of them. The *Jews* not only Blasphemed *Christ* in the Synagogues, but made choice of Men on purpose, whom they sent from *Jerusalem* in-

(h) Just. Martyr. Dialog.

to

(i) Id.
Apol. 2.

to all Parts of the World to vilifie him and his Religion. (i) And because Christians spoke of *Christ's* Kingdom, this was understood to their Prejudice, as if they had been for setting up a Temporal Kingdom by Rebellion. And the evil Doctrins and Practices of divers Hereticks confirmed Men in any ill Opinion, which they had conceived of Christians in general. The absurd Doctrins and Heresies of the *Gnosticks* and other Hereticks, were by the Enemies of the Gospel in their Censures and Invectives applied to all Christians without distinction, and were taken upon Trust by most Men. (k) *Celsus* makes Objections from the erroneous and wicked Notions and Practices of the *Ophitæ*, the *Valentinians*, the *Marcionites* and others. This caused the Christians in their Apologies to press earnestly for a fair and impartial Hearing of their Cause, beseeching their Enemies that they would not be so injurious to the Truth and to themselves, as to despise and condemn what they did not understand: They were desirous to undergo any Tryal, if they might but be admitted to be heard.

(l) *Æl. Lamprid.*
in *Alex. Severo.*

6. Yet many, who did not actually become Christians, had more favourable and just Thoughts of the Christian Religion. (l) *Alexander Severus* had the Effigies of *Christ* in his Chappel, and had designed to erect a Temple for the Worship of him, and to insert his Name among the Heathen Gods.

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As it is reported, that *Adrian* likewise with the same Intention had commanded Temples to be built without Images in all Cities, but was dissuaded by some, who consulted the Oracles about it, which gave out, that all Men would then become Christians, and the other Temples would soon be forsaken. This, which is related concerning *Adrian*, has been by some supposed to be a mistake, because the Fathers say nothing of it. But *Æl. Lampridius* (or rather *Spartianus*) who mentions it, being a Heathen, might perhaps have it from the *Gentiles*, for it was only in *Adrian's* Intention, to set up the Worship of *Christ*, which might be unknown by the Christians of his time, the design being laid aside upon consulting the Oracles. It was certainly reported in the Historian's time, as he declares, and yet this Objection lies as well against the Report as against the Reality of the thing: For it is strange that a Report of this nature should be mentioned by no Christian Writer, though there had been no Truth in it. (m) *Æmilianus* the Prefect of *Egypt* asked *Dionysius*, Bishop of *Alexandria*, when he was brought before him, why, if he, whom the Christians worshipped, be God, they could not worship him with the other Gods? Many admired the Doctrin, and were convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion, who could not free themselves from the Prejudices of their Education; they would

(m) *Euseb. Hist. lib VII. c. 11*

would have been willing to have it taken in among others, but could not bring themselves to relinquish all their old Religions for it. The Calumnies raised against the Christians had caused the popular *Odium* and Rage against them, but they were Vindicated by

(n) Plin. lib. X. Epist. 97. Just. Mar. Apol. 2. Euf. Hist. lib. IV. c. 8, 9, 13.

(o) Just. Martyr. Dial.

(p) Epist. 49. & Fragm. Epist. p. 305.

(q) Aug. Civit. Dei lib. VI. c. 11.

(n) *Pliny* in an Epistle to *Trajan*, by *Serenius Granianus* Proconsul of *Asia* in his Epistle to *Adrian*, by *Adrian* himself in his Rescript, by *Antoninus Pius* in his Epistle to the Common Council or the Community of the Estates of *Asia*, though some ascribe this Epistle to *M. Antoninus* (not to mention his Epistle to the Senate of *Rome*.) (o) *Trypho* the Jew likewise frees them from the Crimes commonly laid against them, and owns the Excellency of their Precepts contained in the Gospel. And it is observable, that those Crimes which had been wont to be objected against the Christians by their former Adversaries, were not mentioned by *Julian*, in Discourses written to oppose them; who (p) elsewhere speaks of them in such a manner, and so much to their commendation, as shews the mighty force of Truth which could extort it from him. But the Fear and Shame of Men hindered divers from embracing the Christian Religion, who had a truer Notion of Things, than to approve of their own. (q) *Seneca* exposed the Heathen Worship, and express'd himself with bitterness against the Jews, but being able to find nothing to blame

blame in the Christian Religion, nor daring to commend it for fear of giving Offence to the Heathens, he made no mention of it at all.

These and such as these were the Occasions of the Unbelief of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*: Though it must be confessed, that there is nothing more difficult to be accounted for than the Notions and Actions of Men; it is as hard to give an Account how (r) *Seneca* and *Plutarch* should allow of the Murdering or Starving of poor Infants (as they certainly did) as why they were not Christians. No *Phænomena* in Nature can be more variable and uncertain in their Causes than the Opinions and Practices of Men, which differ according to their Tempers and Capacities and Circumstances; it is sufficient, if we can find out any probable Solution, and have several to offer, which might take place according to several Cases. But the Writings of such as opposed the Christian Religion, were very slight and frivolous, containing a Confession for the most part of the principal Matters of Fact, upon which our Faith is established, and raising only some weak Cavils which never came up to the main Cause, or undertook to disprove the Truth of the Miracles and Prophecies upon which it is founded. They could not deny the Miracles, upon which our Religion is established, and then let any Man judge what Reasons they could have

(r) Senec. de Ira. lib. I. c. 25. Plut. in Lycurg.

have for their Infidelity. And indeed the prevailing of the Christian Religion under all manner of Disadvantages as to Humane Means, shewed that the Adversaries of it, had little to say against it, For they must be but poor Arguments, which could not dissuade Men from becoming Christians, when they must incur all the Dangers and Sufferings of this World to be so.

The Books of the first Heathen Writers against the Christian Religion are frequently cited by St. *Jerom*, and St. *Austin*, and other Authors of their Time, as commonly known, and probably they were extant long after. So that their Arguments were baffled, and destroyed, long before the Books themselves, and they had Time and Opportunity enough to do all the Mischief that they were capable of. And their Writings are not yet so far lost, but that we still know their Principal Arguments, which the Christian Writers have not concealed, but have given them their full Force, and commonly in their own Words. *Origen* was so careful to omit nothing considerable which *Celsus* had alleged, that he was often forced to make Apologies for mentioning the same things over again, rather than he would seem to let any things pass, which was Material, that his Adversary had said, without taking Notice of it. (s) And some Pieces are preserved entire, as the Petition of *Symmachus*

(s) Ambr.
lib. 2. E-
pist. 11.
Aug. Epist
43.

machus among the Epistles of St. *Ambrose*, and the Epistle of *Maximus Madaurensis* among those of St. *Austin*. The Arguments of *Julian* are set down at large by St. *Cyril*; and we Learn from (t) St. *Chrysostom* that the Books of the Philosophers against the Christian Religion, were neglected and despised by the Gentiles themselves, and were scarce to be found but among the Christians, before the Edict of *Theodosius Junior*, to prohibit them.

Πανηγυρ.
εις Βαβυλ.
λογ. β.
Vid. Span-
hem. in
Julian.
oper. Prae-
fat.

There was a long Succession of Philosophers and Sophists, who made it their business to oppose the Christian Religion. The School of *Platonists*, which continued at *Athens* for some Ages, would revive, or reinforce, any Arguments, that had been used by their Predecessors in Opposition to Christianity. *Proclus* and *Damascius*, who were of this School, lived about the middle of the Sixth Age, and the Writings of *Damascius* were extant (u) in *Photius's* time, in the middle of the Ninth Age; the History of *Eunapius* was then likewise extant, and is (x) said to be preserved at *Venice*: We have the Abridgment of it by *Zosimus* and a sufficient Specimen of his malicious Invectives in his other Writings. And it is probable, that these, and many other Books of the like nature, which are now lost, continued much longer, than any Accounts, which we have now remaining of them mention. Of about

(u) Phot.
cod.
CLXXXI.
CCXLII.
LXXVII.

(x) Voss de
Græc. Hist.

(y) Holstein. de Vit & Script. Porphyrt. c. 10. Thirty Answers (y) which were written to *Porphyry*, by several Authors, not one of them is now to be found. When the World was satisfied of the insufficiency of his Objections, the Answers to his Books were as little regarded as the Books themselves, but underwent the same Fate with them.

The *Jews*, who from the beginning of Christianity, before, but especially since, the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, have in vast Numbers been spread all over the World, and have ever been the most implacable Enemies of the Gospel, had the greatest Opportunity to detect any fallhood in it, and have never omitted any Advantage of improving and enforcing the Arguments against it; and and therefore would be sure to retain any thing considerable, which had been objected by their Fore-Fathers, or by the Heathens, with whom they conversed. The *Jews* have been a perpetual restless Enemy in all Parts and Ages of the World, and nothing material in this Case, would escape their Observation. But out of the Writings of the Ancient *Jews*, which are still extant, many things have been alleged by many Learned Men, of our own and other Nations, in confirmation of our Religion, from the Confession of the *Jews* themselves.

The Unbelief therefore both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* of those Ages, is no material Objection; nor altogether so unaccountable
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as the Unbelief of too many now, who were born among Christians, and have had their Education in the Christian Religion. The Truth is, Example is always the weakest Argument in any Case, and can be of no Force or Authority against the clearest rational Evidence.

CHAP. XXXI.

That the Confidence of Men of false Religions, and their Willingness to suffer for them, is no Prejudice to the Authority of the True Religion.

THE Christian Religion doth infinitely surpass all others in the Number of its Martyrs of both Sexes, of every Age and Nation, and Rank and Condition. Mistaken ignorant Zealots may often have suffered for other Religions, but Men of the highest Station and Worth, and inferiour to none in the Knowledge and Experience of every thing that the World esteems Excellent, have renounced all, and upon choice, and after a full consideration of the Merits of the Cause, have laid down their Lives for the sake of the Gospel. Tyrants of the greatest Power and Cruelty have made it their Aim and Ambition
M m 2 by

(a) Gu-
ter. In-
script. p.
238, 280.

by all sorts of Tortures to extirpate the Christian Religion; they esteemed their Persecutions matter of Triumph, and a fit subject for the (a) Inscriptions of Monuments erected to their Memories. But the invincible Patience and glorious Sufferings of the Christians prevailed against all the Rage and Force of their Enemies. If the Martyrologies of all Religions were to be compared, there would soon appear so manifest a difference between the Christian Martyrs and the Sufferers for other Religions, that nothing would be needful to be said upon this subject. But remembering with whom I have to deal, I am resolved to take every thing at the lowest, and argue with them upon their own Terms. Let us for a while set aside whatever of this nature might be said in preference of the Christian Martyrs, and suppose the Numbers and Zeal of the Martyrs (for so we must call them at present) of other Religions, to have been as great as can be imagined; yet the Cause itself makes a plain difference between them.

An ignorant Zeal in a wrong Cause is no Argument against the Goodness of any Cause, which is maintained and promoted by such a Zeal as is reasonable, and proceeds upon sure Grounds. Indeed, it were very hard and very strange, if that which is true, should be ever the less certain, or the less to be regarded and esteemed, because there may be other things that are false, of which some
Men

Men are as firmly persuaded, and are as much concerned for them, as any one can be for the Truth itself. And yet this is the wisest thing that many have to pretend against the certainty of the Religion, in which they were Baptised, that there are many Impostures in the World, and none is without its Zealots to appear in Vindication of it. I am confident no Man ever parted with any thing, but his Religion, upon so weak a Pretence.

A false Religion is not the only thing for which Men are wont to have an undeserved Value; but their Country, their Friends, and themselves they are commonly as much mistaken in, and do as highly overprize: Is there then no real difference, or solid worth in any of these? Some of the most unlikely Countrys in the World have been admired by the Natives, as if they were the Garden of *Eden*, and the Place of *Paradise*: Though there is nothing easier, than to make a distinction concerning different Countrys. And it is as easie to distinguish between the *Elysium* of the Heathens, or *Mahomet's Paradise*, and the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and between the Ways which lead to them. There is nothing, especially if it be of any Moment and Consequence to them, for which Men have not shewn themselves passionately concerned; and it is not to be expected that they should be so much more infallible in
M m 3 Religion

Religion than in other things, or should be so much less in earnest about it, as not to discover the same Frailties, and the same Affections, which are visible in all the other Actions and Business of their Lives.

It is often seen in most Cases, that some are as earnest and zealous in a false Cause, as others are in a True; but doth this prove that there is no difference between Falshood and Truth? When two Men of opposite Parties are equally confident of the Goodness of their Cause, it is certain that but one of them can be in the right; and it is as certain, that one of them must be, at least, so far in the right, as he contradicts the other; because, as the two Parts of a Contradiction cannot be both True, so they cannot be both False. If then a confident and zealous Persuasion doth not determine Right and Wrong, True and False, the remaining difficulty is how to distinguish them, and that must be by the proper Evidence, and the intrinsic Goodness of the Cause.

And our Evidence in behalf of our Religion is plain matter of Fact, as the Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension of our Blessed Saviour, and the Miracles wrought by him and his Apostles. And if our Religion has sufficient Proof of what we assert in matter of Fact, and other Religions have not sufficient Proof of that Authority to which they lay claim, this must determine the Point,

Point, though a *Mahometan* or *Pagan* should be as zealous for his Religion, as a *Christian* can be. It is commonly and truly said, that it is not the Suffering, but the Cause, which makes the Martyr; and if Men of False Religions have never so much Confidence of the Truth of them, and have no Ground for it, this can be no Argument against the Grounds and Proofs upon which the Evidence of the Christian Religion depends. Other Religions may have their Zealots, who offer themselves to die for them, but the Christian Religion properly has the only Martyrs. For Martyrs are *Witnesses*, and no other Religion is capable of being attested in such a manner as the Christian Religion; no other Religion was ever propagated by Witnesses, who had seen and heard, and been every way conversant in what they witnessed concerning the Principles of their Religion; no Religion besides was ever preached by Men, who, after an unalterable Constancy under all kinds of Sufferings, at last died for asserting it, when they must of necessity have known, whether it were true or false, and therefore certainly knew it to be true, or else they would never have suffered and died in that manner for it; no other Religion was ever attested from its first Propagation for several Hundreds of Years together, by Men who had either seen the first Preachers themselves, or had been acquainted with others who

had seen them, or had wrought Miracles, and seen others work them; no other Religion is contained in Books, which were written at the first Propagation of it, and dispers'd into all Countries, in all Languages, amongst all sorts of Men, and especially amongst those who were most concerned, and most able and desirous to disprove it, if it had been false; no Religion besides has by so weak and unlikely means prevailed over all the Power and Policy of the World; none is in its Doctrin so agreeable to Reason, and so worthy of God for its Author; and none has been delivered down with so clear a continued and uninterrupted Testimony through all Ages, and conveyed by a succession of Testimonies to this present Age: And therefore no other Religion can have Martyrs, who can die in confirmation of such a Testimony as this, or who can be Martyrs and Witnesses to it by assuring the World at their Death, that they have received the Religion thus testified and confirmed, for which they die.

It is not the bare asserting a thing boldly, and then dying for it, which makes a Martyr, but the Qualifications necessary in a Witness are necessary in him, that is, that he should have all Opportunities needful to know the Truth, as well as no Temptation to speak the contrary. Which Qualifications were evident in the Apostles and first Martyrs, whose
Testi-

Testimony is that upon which the Proof of our Religion is founded, and the Martyrdoms of latter Ages are additional Testimonies, which without the former would be insignificant, but supposing them are all the Testimony that can be given to any matter of Fact at this distance of Time, and are as much beyond the Sufferings in behalf of any other Religion, as the Evidence of the Christian Religion is beyond the Evidence for all others.

It is not merely Zeal, though it proceed even to Death and Martyrdom, upon which we build our Faith, but the Reasons which Christians have for their Zeal. Divers Nations have been as earnest Assertors of their Fabulous Antiquities, as others can be of theirs, which are known to be true; but are these ever the less, or those ever the more true upon that account? We insist upon it, that we have Books to shew, and clear Evidence to produce for what we maintain, and these have been examined by many Men in every Age, and compared with what is to be alleged in behalf of contrary Religions, and Men of the greatest Learning and Judgment and Prudence have chosen to die rather than to renounce this Religion for any other, after the nicest and most impartial Examination they could make. Whereas the Zealots and Martyrs for the Religions which are contrary to Christianity, must be acknowledged
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to be Men that understand nothing of Antiquity, but are ignorant of the History of their several Religions, and take all upon uncertain Report, and absurd Traditions, without any Proof or Possibility of it, and even against manifest Reason, and the Evidence of undoubted History.

So plain is it, that the Zeal and Confidence of Men of false Religions, and their willingness to die for them can be no prejudice to the Authority and Certainty of the true Religion. The Enthusiasms and vain Notions and Conceits of some Zealots can be no more a Prejudice to the Truth and Reality of our Religion, than it is an Argument against the Truth and Certainty of Human Reason, that there are so many fools and Madmen in the World.

CHAP. XXXII.

That Differences in Matters of Religion, are no Prejudice to the Truth and Authority of it.

THERE is nothing which has proved a greater Snare and Scandal to weak Minds, nor which gives the Enemies of Religion greater Advantage, as they think, against it, than the Dissentions amongst Christians,

Christians, and the different Sects and Parties into which they are divided. This makes some willing to conclude that there is no certainty on any side, when they see equal Zeal and equal Confidence in Men of all Persuasions, that contend for their several Opinions.

But St. Paul writes to the *Corinthians*, that there must be not only Divisions, but Heresies also, and not only that they must be, but that they are not without their use and expediency in the Church; They are so far from being any real Prejudice to the Truth and Certainty of Religion, that they do indeed conduce to manifest the Excellency of it, and the Sincerity of those that profess it. *For there must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you, 1 Cor. xi. 19.* From whence I shall shew, I. That Differences in matters of Religion must be among Christians, unless God should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent them. II. That it is not necessary nor expedient, that God should thus interpose. III. That these Differences, how great and how many soever they be, even the worst of Schisms and Heresies, are no prejudice to the Truth and Authority of Religion.

I. That Differences in matters of Religion must be among Christians, unless God should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent them. *There must be also Heresies among you:*

you: The miraculous Power and Demonstration of an infallible Spirit in the Apostles themselves could not hinder the rise of them. *It must needs be, says our Saviour, that Offences, or it is impossible but that Offences will come; but wo unto him through whom they come,* Matth. xviii. 7. Luke xvii.

The Church can by no means be free from Offences, Scandals and Divisions, unless God should forcibly restrain Men from running into them.

The Tempers and Capacities of Men are very different, and therefore in many Cases they will make a different Judgment of Things. Much Attention and Thoughtfulness, and an exact Knowledge of Antiquity, is requisite to make a true Judgment in divers Controversies, and few Men are willing to be at that pains, which is necessary to inform themselves aright in lesser Difficulties; they are contented to take up with the Appearances of things, which first offer themselves, or to which by Custom and Education they have been most used: There is so much Difficulty to get rid of Prejudices, so much Labour and Study is in many cases required in the search after Truth, that few can prevail with themselves to undergo it. Few Men examine the Ground of things, and fewer do it to any Purpose; most Men follow, as they are led, without any further Care, or Thought, and die in the Religion
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in which they were brought up, without much troubling themselves whether it be true or false, but taking all upon Trust, if they happen to be in the Right, it is by chance, and more than they know, or are able to prove; if they be in the Wrong, they know as little of it, but Right, or Wrong, they follow the Example of others, of whom they have conceived a favourable Opinion, or who have some Authority with them to influence them; they profess their Religion, as they practise other things, for no better Reason, than because they see others have done it before them, and they stand up for it only, as they do for all Customs, which by long use are become familiar, and almost natural to them, but may be worn out by a different Practice and Custom.

And when the Generality of Men are thus careless and unconcerned to examine the Grounds and Principles of their several Religions, this gives a mighty Opportunity and Advantage to Men of ill Principles, and ill Designs, to infuse and spread their Opinions. For if by the Plausibleness and Importunity of their Insinuations, or by the Profession of a more than ordinary Zeal and Strictness in some things, that are most popular, they can but gain a few Persons of Note and Interest, who may influence others, a Party is made, and a Sect set up, which may perhaps continue for some Generations; and a fondness
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for Novelty, and a Personal Dislike and Prejudice against some Men, and an Esteem and Admiration of others, and several Accidents, as they fall in with the several Tempers and Inclinations of Men, may make great Additions to a Sect that is once formed. Men, who thought themselves disobliged amongst the *Jews*, were wont to go over to the *Samaritans*; and Deserters, in Religion are as usual as in War, upon any great Discontent, or upon hopes of great Advantage. And these Men to Testify their Sincerity, are observed commonly to be most Violent; however they serve to make a Number, and to strengthen a Party.

Most Schisms and Heresies have been begun by Men of ill Designs, who under pretences of Godliness, gratified their own Passions of Ambition, or Covetousness, or more Scandalous Vices. This was the Original of the Heresies in the Apostles days, and it has been observable in the first Authors of them, ever since. An Affectation of Singularity, of Popular Fame, and Preeminence have been the Occasion of great Mischieves in the Church. Some Men are as fond of their own New Opinions, as others are of Honours, or Wealth, or Pleasure; and can bear no Contradiction, but contend for a kind of Empire in Knowledge, and shew a mighty Zeal to gain Profelytes, because this is to extend their Conquests, and

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enlarge their Dominion over Mens Faith. Some that *devoured Widows Houses*, have for a pretence made long Prayers. *Matt. xxiii. 14.* And it is a shame, and Horror, even to speak of those things, which have been done by others; not only *in secret* but openly, and in the View of the World, under the most solemn and Zealous Professions for the Glory of God, and the Good of Souls. And the Errors of Men of no ill meaning, but of great Zeal, with little Knowledg, have sometimes found a strange Acceptance in the World, for the sake of that Integrity and Sincerity, which appeared in their first Authors.

Now when all the Passions and Infirmities, and Vices of Men thus contribute to produce and promote Differences in Religion, it is no greater Wonder, that there are such Differences, than that there are Frailties and Vices amongst Men; that some Men are vicious, and ready to seduce others, and that others are easy to be seduced.

St. Paul complains of false Apostles, *deceitful Workers, Transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and no Marvel, says he, for Satan himself is Transformed into an Angel of Light; therefore it is no great thing, if his Ministers also be Transformed, as the Ministers of Righteousness, whose end shall be according to their Works, 2 Cor. xi. 13. 14. 15.* Satan himself strives to appear like an Angel of

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Light, and Sin is forced to take the disguise of Religion. Vice is a thing, which few Men care much to own, how fond soever they be of it: Numbers in other cases are wont to bring things into Reputation, but it is not so in most Vices, which tho' they have been practised by great Numbers of Men in all Ages, yet have been always nevertheless infamous; and this shews the detestable Nature of Vice and Irreligion, that they could never become creditable in a vicious and irreligious World, but bad Men are ashamed of them, and endeavour to conceal and hide them under some colour of Religion and Vertue.

But since every Vice, and every Passion, and Interest of Men may conduce to the raising and fomenting of Differences in Religion, it is as impossible, that they should not be in the World, as that Sin it self should not be in it, which can never be wholly prevented, unless God should force Men to be Good; and therefore it is impossible, that there should be no Differences in Religion, unless the same Force and Necessity should restrain Men from them.

II. It is not necessary, nor expedient, that God should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent Differences in Matters of Religion: Because it would contradict the very Design of all Religion for God thus to interpose: The Design of Religion is to Direct

rect and Command Men, what to Believe, and what to Do, upon such Terms as may prevail with them by reasonable Arguments; by Exhortations and Encouragements on the one hand, and Admonitions and Threatnings on the other. But to force Men to be of one Mind, and one Profession, would be to lay aside these Terms, and to render the Motives and Arguments which Religion proposeth useles, and to have no Regard to the Rewards, and Punishments, by which it is enjoyned. There can be no more Reason, that God should constrain Men to have right Notions of Religion, than that he should force them to obey those Notions, and put them in Practice; or that he should restrain Men from Heresies and Schisms; that is from such Sins as more directly and immediately concern Religion, rather than from any other Sins: But there is great Reason, why it should not be so, because this would make Religion it self useles and insignificant, by taking away the Grounds and Foundations of all Religions, and by destroying the Liberty of Mankind, which is necessary in all Acts of Religion. For, he that Acts by Necessity, cannot Act by the Principles of Religion, which advises and commands Men to *refuse the Evil, and chuse the Good*. Differences in Religion could not be prevented without over-ruling all the Passions, and hindering all the Vices of Men,

and without frustrating the Commands and Precepts, and contradicting the Design and Institution of Religion; and it is not to be expected, that rather than suffer Differences in Religion, God should so check and restrain Men, as not to leave them at Liberty to Act upon the Principles of Religion, but upon mere Force and Necessity. If Men be permitted to Err and to Sin, they will Err and Sin in Matters relating to Religion, as well as in others, and to debar Men unavoidably from Sin and Error would be to proceed in such a manner, as is inconsistent with the Motives and Arguments both of Reason and Religion, and to offer Violence, not only to human Nature, but to the Wisdom and Counsel of God, in his Dispensations for the Salvation of Mankind.

It is the Wisdom of God not to force Men upon doing Good, but to bring Good out of Evil, and if Men will resolve to commit Sin, and will not be prevailed upon by all that God has said and done to withdraw them from it; then to make their worst Actions instrumental to his own Glory, and to the Salvation of other Men. And there is this good effect from the most pernicious Heresies and Schisms, *That those which are approved may be made manifest by them*; that the Sincerity of the good Christian may appear, and that the Disguise may be taken off from Hypocrites, that they may be no longer able to seduce

seduce Men by a shew of Godliness. It is a just Judgment of God upon unrepenting Sinners, to *let them fall from one Wickedness to another, and not come into his Righteousness*; to punish secret Sins, by suffering Men to run into publick and notorious Crimes, whereby they discover and expose themselves to the World. Thus it was in the case of those Hereticks of whom St. Paul speaks, *They profess that they knew God, but in Works they denied him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16. And giving a full and lamentable Description of this sort of Men, in conclusion he says, *But they shall proceed no farther; for their Folly shall be manifest to all Men*, 2 Tim. iii. 9. They were permitted to come to such horrid and frightful degrees of Wickedness and Blasphemy, as that all Men, who meant well, would be sure to avoid them, and to depart from them; and of those who joined themselves with such Men, and went over to them, St. John declares, *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us*, 1 John ii. 19.

And when these and such like Heresies break loose, and disturb the Peace of the Church, this makes all sincere Christians more careful and diligent to *hold fast the form of sound Words, and earnestly contend for the*

Faith which was once delivered to the Saints. Men are apt to be too careless and unconcerned about Religion, when they meet with no Opposition: But when the Faith is denied, and the Terms of Salvation are disputed against, this will stir up and actuate a mighty Zeal in all, who have any regard for the Honour of God, and the Salvation of Men. From whence it comes to pass, that most Heresies have been of no long continuance, but appear and shew themselves, are disproved, become odious, and after a while are hardly known, but from the Books of such as confuted them; and those Points of Doctrine which were contradicted, become so much the better established, and the more firmly believed for the future. Heresies are but the Tryals of Religion, as Dangers are of Courage; it stands to the Honour and Evidence of Truth, to be exercised and encompassed with Errors, which fall before it, and are able to do it no hurt.

So that Differences in Religion are suffered by Almighty God, as all other Sins are, because it is the design of Religion, not to compel Men, but to persuade and exhort them, and to permit them to be guilty of all manner of Sin, whilst it offers the most prevailing Arguments and Motives against it; and to be guilty of Schisms and Heresies amongst the rest: And these are Temptations and Tryals to good Men, and often serve
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as Judgments upon the wicked, to punish one Wickedness with another, and expose them to the World for Hypocrites and Impostors. And they serve to confirm the Articles of our Faith, which hereby become the more thoroughly examined, and the more fully explained. And these are sufficient Reasons, why God should not by his Almighty Power hinder those Differences in Religion, which must of necessity happen by the Sins and Folly Men, unless he should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent them.

III. These Differences how great and how many soever they may be, even the worst of Schisms and Heresies are no Prejudice to the Truth and Certainty of Religion. Religion is our Direction, our Way to Heaven and Happiness, but will any Man say, that because there are many wrong ways, therefore there is none right? This is beneath the Discretion of every ordinary Traveller, who, if the way be difficult, resolves to use the more Care and Diligence in finding it out, but never concludes with himself that there is no such way, and no such place as that which he intends to go. For a Man to argue from the multitude of Heresies and Schisms against the Truth of Religion, is as if he would prove, that because there are so many *Curve* Lines, therefore there can be none *Right*; when for this very Reason we must conclude, that there is such a thing as straightness, or else
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there could be nothing crooked ; for we can have no Notion of one without the other. And as all Obliquity supposes Rectitude, from which it declines, so Vice supposes Vertue, and Error supposes Truth, and Error in Religion must suppose Truth in Religion. For whatever is contrary to any thing necessarily implies the Being of that to which it is contrary ; and that which is not, can have nothing contrary to it. Nothing is more certain than it is, that if there were no Vertue, there could be no Vice ; if no Truth, there could be no Error, and unless there were Truth and Excellency in Religion, it were impossible that there should be any such thing as Heresie or Schism, which are other words for Error and Vice in matters of Religion. And it hath been already observed, that the worst Heresies give an occasion to the clearing those Points of Religion which are disputed against, and so must be far from invalidating the Truth of it.

But because these are things which some will not understand, or may be unwilling to acknowledge ; and it is generally looked upon as a sure Argument of the weakness of any Cause, when those that maintain it are not agreed about it amongst themselves ; let us consider, 1. That all Parties are agreed in the Truth of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular : 2. That there is nothing besides in which Men have

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not disagreed, as well as in matters of Religion.

1. All Parties are agreed in the Truth of Religion in General. Even Hypocrites and Impostors so far own Religion, as to believe that it is worth the counterfeiting. For no Man counterfeits that which is not, no, nor that which has no Worth nor Excellency in it. No Man will be at much pains to be thought an Atheist, or an Infidel, who is not such ; and no Man will endeavour to be thought Vicious, unless he be so indeed. There are few pretenders to the Shame and Infamy which in Ages have been inseparable from Irreligion ; but it is the natural Sense which Men have of Religion, that gives it so great Credit and Honour in a wicked World, that even the Shadow and Counterfeit of it has sometimes too much prevailed.

But farther, all Sects and Parties of Christians are agreed in the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the only difference amongst them is concerning particular Doctrins and Opinions, that is, concerning the true Meaning and Explication of it : And no Man disputes about the Meaning of that which they do not at the same time suppose to be. When any Point or Clause of a Law is in Dispute, it would be ridiculous from thence to conclude, that no such Law was ever made ; because all Parties must agree that there is such a Law, or else there could be no dispute

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about it. And when Differences arise in Religion, it is an Argument for the Truth of Religion, because there can be Difference about nothing, and Men would never differ about Religion, if it were not true, or they did not think it to be so.

But Christians are not only agreed in the main that the Gospel is true, but they are likewise agreed in the Sense and Meaning of it, as to the Fundamental Articles necessary to Salvation. This was the ancient Rule and Measure laid down by *Vincentius Lirinensis*, of the Catholick Doctrin necessary to be believed, that it had been believed in all Ages, in all Places, and in all Churches. And the excellent Arch-Bishop *Usher*, whose

Judgment in the Case may safely be relied upon, has (a) declared; That if at this day we should take a survey of the several (b) Professions of Christianity, that have any large spread in any part of the World (as of the Religion of the Roman and the Reformed Churches in our Quarters, of the Ægyptians and Æ-

thiopians in the South, of the Grecians and other Christians in the Eastern Parts) and should put by the Points wherein they differ from one another, and gather into one Body the rest of the Articles, wherein they all did generally agree; we should find, that in those Proposit-

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ions, which without all Controversie are so universally received in the whole Christian World, so much Truth is contained, as being joined with holy Obedience, may be sufficient to bring a Man unto everlasting Salvation. Neither have we cause to doubt but that as many as do walk according to this Rule (neither overthrowing that which they have built, by superinducing any damnable Heresies thereupon, nor otherwise vitiating their Holy Faith with a lewd and wicked conversation) Peace shall be upon them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of God. And he afterwards says, in relation to the Papists in Ireland, that he had sometimes treated with those of the opposite Party, and moved them, that howsoever in other things we did differ one from another, yet we should join together in teaching those main Points, the knowledge whereof was so necessary unto Salvation, and of the Truth whereof there was no Controversie betwixt us.

And as to particular Controversies, tho' one would imagin that wise Men of all others should be least apt to fall out about Words; yet it is an old Observation, that when learned and wise Men disagree in Opinion, the Difference is commonly in the manner of expressing themselves; or however it is generally about the manner of the Existence, not about the Existence, it self, of Things. Thus what is better known by all than the Sun? and yet what Disputes have there been, and ever will be concerning its Light, and Motion.

(a) Brief Declaration of the Universality of the Church of Christ, and the Unity of the Catholick Faith professed therein, delivered in a Sermon before the King the 20th of June, 1624.

(b) This Passage was produced by Dr. Potter, and defended by Mr. Chillingworth, chap. 4. S. 44, &c.

Motion, and Distance, and Dimensions ?

But it ought likewise to be considered, that in the Management of the Controversies in Religion, such as are otherwise good Men, are wont many times to be little favourable in representing the Opinions of their Adversaries ; and if Men might be allowed to explain themselves, and were not provoked and exasperated beyond their own calmer Thoughts and Temper, the Differences in Religion would not be near so great, nor so many, as they now appear to be. It so happens in all Cases, that Differences are widened by eager and contentious Debates ; Men speak more than they designed, and then resolve to defend what they have said, so that Disputes become endless, and are drawn out into Particulars without number, which were never at first thought of. Many Books of Controversie are half taken up in asking cross Questions ; which perhaps neither of the Parties can answer to satisfaction, nor do they often seem to design any thing farther, than to puzzle one another, and to be as captious and as troublesome as they can. But this ought not to be imputed to the uncertainty of the Subject, but to the perverseness of Men ; and those, who upon every occasion fall into so great Heats and Contentions, must needs be very well assured of that in which they agree, that is, of the Truth of Religion in
General,

General, and of the Christian Religion in Particular, as to the Fundamental Points of it. The Differences among Christians may serve to prove to us Divine Authority of our Religion, and of the Scriptures, which contain it, since Christians agree in asserting their Divine Authority, and have never been so much at unity among themselves, as to be able to agree to corrupt them, but have certainly delivered them down entire to us.

2. It is not Religion only, which Men Dispute about, but there is nothing besides, in which they have not disagreed. It is observed, that want of Experience and Knowledge of the World, leads Men into more inconveniencies, than want of Parts and Abilities. And it is as certain, that a thorough Knowledge of the Debates and Contentions in Philosophy, would sooner cure most Men of their Infidelity, than any Arguments could do. Those who raise Objections against Religion, if they would but consider, that almost every thing else has as great Difficulties, would be ashamed to reject Religion upon Pretences, which, if they hold, must force them to reject all other things with it, and to believe just nothing at all. There have been Disputes in all Ages concerning Light and Motion, the Wind and Seas, and other Wonders of Nature, but it would be absurd for this Reason, to question, whether there be any such thing as Light and Motion, and
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whatever besides Men have disputed. And yet it is more absurd, if it be possible, to allow that is a good Argument against Religion, but against nothing else. If the Sun yield his Light, and Nature go on in her constant Course, tho' Men differ never so much in their Philosophy about it, what can Religion be the worse for their Disputes? no body thinks, that he sees ever the less for any Difficulties, which have been urged concerning Vision; and why should we be ever the less inclined to believe the Truth of Religion, by reason of any Controversies in it? Men may dispute any thing, and there is hardly any thing but it has been disputed; but nothing is the less credible for being disputed, unless it can be disproved, but is rather confirmed and advanced by it. Truth, is nevertheless Truth for meeting with opposition, but is the more tried, and the more approved, as Strength and Courage is by the sharpest Conflicts.

Since then there will be Vices, as long as there are Men in this World, and Differences and Dissentions in Religion, as long as there are Vices; since they cannot be hindered, but by the Omnipotent Power of God, and there are great Reasons, why he should not interpose to prevent them; since Differences in Religion are so far from implying any uncertainty in Religion, that they rather prove a Confirmation of it, and are in divers respects
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made useful and expedient to the Edification of Christians, it must be great inconsideration and weakness, to produce them as an Objection against Religion.

There must be Heresies, and the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter Times some shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to Seducing Spirits, and Doctrins of Devils, speaking Lies in Hypocrisy, having their Conscience seared with an hot Iron. 1 Tim. iv. 12. The Scripture could not be true, unless these things should happen, which are foretold in several Places of Scripture. *Behold, says our Saviour, I have told you before, Matt. xxiv. 25.* it ought to be no new nor surprising thing to Christians, to see Heresies arise, tho' they be never so wicked and abominable; because we are forewarned to expect them, and they serve to give a kind of Testimony to the True Religion in fulfilling the Predictions of it. They help to prove the Religion, which they would destroy: For if there had been no Heresies, that Religion could not be True, which has foretold them; but since there are Heresies, our Religion is at least so far true as to contain express Prophecies concerning them, which we see daily fulfilled; and as they evidently prove our Religion true in this particular, so they invalidate it in no other. Which is the (b) (b) Just. Mart. Dial. Answer that the Christians anciently returned to the Enemies of Religion, when they made this *Objection* against it. Let

Let us follow the plain, the known, and and confessed Duties of Religion; Humility, Temperance, Righteousness and Charity, and when once we have no Temptations to wish Religion untrue upon the account of the plain Precepts and Directions of it, we shall never suspect it to be so, by reason of any Controversies in it. For if Men will impartially consider things; that Religion which has now For so many Ages stood out all the Assaults and Attempts, with Enemies from without, and Parties within could make against it, and has approved it much better, and more gloriously, than it could have done, if there never had been either Heresies or Schisms. *Let us therefore hold fast the Profession of our Faith without Wavering,* being assured, that the *Gates of Hell*, that is, all the Power and Stratagems of Satan, shall never be able to *prevail against* the Church of Christ, but shall only serve to add to its Victories, and adorn its Triumphs. The Malice, O Lord, and *fierceness of Man shall turn to thy Praise: And the fierceness of them shalt thou refrain* Pf. Lxxvi. 10.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXXIII.

Though all Objections could not be answered, yet this would be no just Cause to reject the Authority of the Scriptures.

ALL Objections, which can with any Colour or Pretence be alleged, have been considered, and answered, by divers Men of Great Learning and Judgment; and several Objections, which have made most noise in the World, as that about the Capacity of the Ark, and others, have been Demonstrated to be groundless and frivolous. But tho' all Difficulties could not be accounted for, yet this would be no just or sufficient cause, why we should reject the Scriptures; because Objections for the most part are impertinent to the Purpose, for which they were designed, and do not at all effect the Evidence, which is brought in proof of the Scriptures; and if they were pertinent, yet unless they could confute that Evidence, they ought not to determine us against them.

He that with an honest and sincere Desire to find out the Truth, or Falshood, of a Revelation, enquires into it, should first consider impartially what can be alleged for it, and afterwards consider the Objections raised against it, that so he may compare the Arguments

ments in proof of it, and the Objections together, and determine himself on that side, which appears to have most Reason for it. But to insist upon particular Objections, collected out of Difficult Places of Scripture, (tho' they would likewise observe the Answers, that have been given, which few of our Objectors have patience to do, but run away with the Objection without staying for an Answer) I say to allege particular Objections, without attending to the main Grounds and Motives, which induce a belief of the Truth of the Scriptures, is a very deceitful way of Arguing: Because it is not in the least improbable, that there may be a true Revelation, which may have great Difficulties in it. But if sufficient Evidence be produced to convince us, that the Scriptures are indeed God's Word, and there be no proof on the contrary to invalidate that Evidence; then all the Objections besides, that can be raised, are but Objections, and no more. For if those Arguments by which our Religion appears to be True, remain still in their full Force, notwithstanding the Objections, and no positive and direct Proof be brought, that they are insufficient, we ought not to reject those Arguments, and the Conclusions deduced from them upon the Account of the Objections, but to reject the Objections for the sake of those Arguments; because if those cannot be disproved, all the
Objections,

which can be thought of, must proceed from some Mistake. For when I am once assured of the Truth of a thing, by direct and positive Proof, I have the same assurance, that all Objections against it must be vain and false, which I have, that that thing is true; because every thing must be false, which is opposite to Truth, and nothing but that which takes off the Arguments, by which any thing is proved to be True, can ever prove it false: But all Objections must be false themselves, or insignificant to the Purpose; for which they are alleged, if the Evidence for the Truth of that, against which they are brought, cannot be disproved, that is, if the Thing, against which they are brought, be True.

To shew this in Particulars. If a Man muster up never so many Inconsistencies, as he thinks, in the Scriptures, yet unless he be as well assured, at least, that these which he calls Inconsistencies, cannot be in any Book of Divine Revelation; as he may be, that the Scriptures are of Divine Revelation, he cannot in Reason reject their Authority. And to be assured of this, it must be considered, what is inconsistent with the Evidence whereby the Authority of the Scriptures is proved to us: For whatever is not inconsistent with this Evidence, cannot be inconsistent with their Authority. In like manner, as if a Man should frame never so many

Objections against the Opinion commonly received, that *Cæsar* himself wrote the *Commentaries* which go under his Name, and not *Julius Cæsar*, or any other Author; unless he can overthrow the Evidence by which *Cæsar* appears to be the Author of them, all his Objections will never amount to a Proof, that he was not the Author.

It is very possible for God to reveal things, which we may not be able to comprehend; and to enact Laws, especially concerning the Rights and Ceremonies enjoined a People so many Ages past, the Reasons whereof we may not be fully to understand; and it is very possible likewise, that there may be great Difficulties in Chronology, and that the Text may in divers places have a different Reading: And though all these things have been cleared to the satisfaction of reasonable Men by several Expositors, yet let us suppose at present to gratifie these Objectors (and this will gratifie them, if any thing can do it) that the Laws are utterly unaccountable, that the Difficulties in Chronology are no way adjusted, that the divers Readings are by no means to be reconciled; yet what doth all this prove? That *Moses* wrought no Miracles? That the Children of *Israel* and the *Ægyptians* were not Witnesses to them? That what the Prophets foretold did not come to pass? That our Saviour never rose from the Dead, and that the Holy Ghost did

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not descend upon the Apostles? Or that any thing is contained in the Scriptures repugnant to the Divine Attributes, or to the natural Notion of Good and Evil? Doth it prove any thing of all this, or can it be pretended to prove it? If it cannot (and nothing is more plain, than that it cannot) then all the Evidence produced in Proof of the Authority of the Scriptures stands firm, notwithstanding all this mighty noise of the Obscurity, and the Inconsistency, and the Uncertainty of the Text of the Scriptures. And the next enquiry naturally will be, not how the Scriptures can be from God, if these things be to be found in them (for it is already proved that they are from God, and therefore this must from henceforth be taken for granted, till it can be disproved) but the only Enquiry will be, how these Passages are to be explained, or reconciled with other Places.

For let us consider this way of Reasoning, which is made use of to disprove the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures in other things, and try whether we are wont to reason thus in any case, but that of Religion, and whether we should not be ashamed of this way of arguing in any other Case. How little is it that we thoroughly understand in natural Things, and yet how seldom do we doubt of the Truth and Reality of them, because we may puzzle and perplex our selves in the Explication of them? For

instance, we discern the Light, and feel the Warmth and Heat of the Sun, and have the Experience of the constant returns of Day and Night, and of the several Seasons of the Year; and no Man doubts but that all this is effected by the approach or withdrawing of the Sun's influence: But whoever will go about to explain all this, and to give a particular Account of it, will find it a very hard Task; and such Objections have been urged against every Hypothesis in some Point or other, as perhaps no Man is able fully to answer. But doth any Man doubt whether there be such a thing as Light and Heat, as Day and Night, though he cannot be satisfied whether the Sun or the Earth move? Or do Men doubt whether they can see or not, till they can demonstrate how Vision is made? And must none be allowed to see but Mathematicians? Or do Men refuse to eat, till they are satisfied how and after what manner they are nourish'd? Yet if we must be sway'd by Objections, which do not come up to the main Point, nor affect the Truth and Reality of Things, but only fill our Minds with Scruples and Difficulties about them, we must believe nothing which we do not fully comprehend in every part and circumstance of it. For whatever we are ignorant of concerning it, that may, it seems, be objected against the thing it self, and may be a just Reason why we should doubt of it. We must have a care of being too confident, that

we move, before we can give an exact account of the Cause and Laws of Motion, which the greatest Philosophers have not been able to do; we must not presume to eat, till we can tell how Digestion and Nourishment are made. In short, this would run us into all the Extravagancies of Scepticism: For upon these Principles it was, that some doubted whether Snow be white, or Honey sweet, or any thing else be of the same Colour or Taste, which it appears to be of, because they could amuse themselves with Difficulties, and they were too much Philosophers to assent to any thing that they did not understand, tho' it were confirmed by the Sense and Experience of all Mankind. They were rational Men, and it was below them to believe their Senses, unless their Reason were convinced, and that was too acute to be convinced, as long as any Difficulty, that could be started, remained unanswered. And thus under the pretence of Reason and Philosophy they exposed themselves to the Scorn and Derision of all who had but the common Sense of Men, without the Art and Subtilty of imposing upon themselves and others.

And it is the same thing in effect, as to matters of Religion. The Scriptures come confirmed down to us by all the ways of confirmation, that the Authority of any Revelation at this distance of time could be expected to have, if it really were, what we

believe the Scriptures to be. Why then do some Men doubt whether they be Authentick? Can they disprove the Arguments which are brought in defence of them? Can they produce any other Revelation more Authentick? Or is it more reasonable to believe that God should not reveal himself to Mankind, than that this Revelation should be his? No; this is not the case, but there are several things to be found in the Scriptures, which they think would not be in them, if they were of Divine Revelation. But a wise Man will never disbelieve a thing for any Objections made against it, which do not reach the Point, nor touch these Arguments, by which it is proved to him. It is not inconsistent, that that may be most true, which may have many Exceptions framed against it, but it is absurd to reject that as incredible, which comes recommended by our Belief by such Evidence as cannot be disprov'd. Till this be done, all which can be said besides, only shews, that there are Difficulties to be met withal in the Scriptures, which was never denied by those, who most firmly and stedfastly believe them.

But Difficulties can never alter the Nature of Things, and make that which is true to become false. There is no Science without its Difficulties, and it is not pretended that Theology is without them. There are many great and inexplicable Difficulties in the Mathe-

Mathematicks; but shall we therefore reject this as a Science of no Value nor Certainty, and believe no Demonstration in *Euclide* to be true, unless we could Square the Circle? And yet this is every whit as reasonable, as it is, not to acknowledge the Truth of the Scriptures, unless we could explain all the Visions in *Ezekiel*, and the *Revelations* of *St. John*. We must believe nothing, and know nothing, if we must disbelieve and reject every thing which is liable to Difficulties. We must not believe we have a Soul, unless we can give an account of all its Operations; nor that we have a Body, unless we can tell all the Parts and Motions, and the whole Frame and Composition of it. We must not believe our Senses, till there is nothing relating to Sensation but what we perfectly understand; nor that there are any Objects in the World, till we know the exact manner how we perceive them, and can solve all Objections that may be raised concerning them. And if a Man can be incredulous to this degree, it cannot be expected that he should believe the Scriptures: But till he is come to this height of Folly and Stupidity, if he will be consistent with himself, and true to those Principles of Reason, from which he argues in all other Cases, he cannot reject the Authority of the Scriptures upon the account of any Difficulties that he finds in them, whilst the Arguments by

which they are proved to be of Divine Authority, remain unanswered. And all the Objections, which can be invented against the Scriptures, cannot seem near so absurd to a considering Man, as to suppose that God should not at all reveal himself to Mankind; or that the Heathen Oracles, or *Mahomet's Alcoran* should be of Divine Revelation.

CHAP. XXXIV.

The Conclusion; containing an Exhortation to a serious Consideration of these things, both from the Example of the wisest and most learned Men, and from the infinite Importance of the Things themselves.

AS Wise and as Learned Men as any that ever lived in the World, have died in the Belief of the Christian Religion, when they had no Interest to engage them in it; and many of them have led their Lives under Persecutions, and have at last been put to Death, rather than they would renounce that Faith which the Scriptures declare to us. It cannot be denied but that there have been Men of as great Learning, and as great Numbers of them, professing the Christian Religion, as have been of all other Religions

Religions in the World: Indeed, all manner of Arts and Sciences have been more improved by Christians, than by all other sorts of Men whatsoever; and all rational and solid Learning is confined, as I may say, within Christendom. For, besides the Idolotrous Worship, and other Impieties notorious among them, whatsoever Learning is to be found among the *Chinese*, or other Heathen Nations, their Notions of Things, so far as they differ from what is contained in the Scriptures, are so obscure and confused at the best, and so groundless, that that Christian must be very weary of his Religion, who can think of changing it for such Uncertainties.

And no Man that profess'd and called himself a Christian ever disbelieved the Scriptures, but there were visibly other Reasons for it than these, which the Nature of the Christian Religion could afford: It was apparent in his Life, that he wished the Christian Religion were false, before he endeavoured to persuade himself that it is not true. Some are possess'd with that intolerable Spirit of Pride and Contradiction, that meer Vanity and a Conceit of being wiser than others makes them find fault with any thing that is generally received; and the greatest Fault which these Men can find with the Christian Religion is, that they have been bred up in it, and therefore they make heavy Complaints of the prejudices of Education, and the

the hindrances which ingenuous Minds labour under, from the influences of it, in the pursuit of Truth: And these Men perhaps might have talk'd as much, and to as much purpose, for Christianity, as they now talk against it, if they had not been Born among Christians, and been bred up in the Christian Religion; they scorn to be the better for their Education, and are ashamed of nothing more than to believe and think like other Men; and they might almost be persuaded to be Christians still, if they could but be singular in being so: For the mere Affectation of Singularity makes them despise and dispute against any thing which others allow and esteem. But it will be hard to find any learned Man of tolerable Modesty and Vertue, and who was not as singular in other things, and in his Notions of Religion, but he has firmly believed the Divine Authority of the Scriptures.

It concerns all, who have any Doubts about these things, to weigh the Objections with the Answers that have been given to them by divers Authors, and withal to observe the importance of the Objections, and how far they affect the main Cause; and still to remember, that it is at every Man's own Peril, if he make a rash and partial Judgment. If our Faith could be of no Benefit or Advantage to us, nor Infidelity any Prejudice, we might take the same Liberty to give Credit

or no Credit to what we read in the Bible, that we use in the Reading all other Books, and to receive or reject it as we think fit, or to believe only just so much, as lies even with our own Understandings and Notions of Things, and at the worst this would be but Folly in us. But it is madness to reject our own Happiness, and make our selves miserable, because we do not perceive the Reasons of all the Means and Methods, which God has been pleas'd to use to make us happy; or are not able to understand every Word of that Book, which contains the Terms of our Salvation.

This is as if a Son should chuse to live miserably, rather than to enjoy a large Estate left him by his Father, because he doth not perceive the design and full meaning of every particular in his Will; he searches out for all Ways and Arts for cavilling at it, and is fond of any pretence to cast it aside as Counterfeit, being resolv'd never to believe it to be his Father's; For his Father was a wise Man, and if it were his, such and such Clauses would not be in it, since there is no reason, that he can see, why they should be inserted; several things mentioned in it, he believes are mis-timed, the Bounds of the Lands are not described by fit Names; besides it is interlined, and he never will accept of such an Estate conveyed to him by such a Will; but chuses rather to be miserable all
the

the Days of his Life. This would be such peevishness and perverseness, as is not to be met withal, where our Temporal Interest is concerned: But too many are too forward to reject the Tenders, and despise the Terms of an everlasting Inheritance in Heaven, tho' at the same time they become obnoxious to all the Curses threatned to Unbelievers, because the Old and New Testament contain some things which may afford matter of Exception and Cavil to captious Men.

God has sent his Prophets to call, and admonish us, and his Son, to reconcile us to himself, by his Death; and to offer us Eternal Peace and Happiness, and he has given us all the Evidence of it, that the nature of the things would admit. The *Jews* have asserted the Authority of the Old Testament from the times of *Moses*, and the Prophets; and the Christians asserted the Truth of the Gospel, when it was impossible for them not to know whether it were true or not; without any prospect of Advantage by it in this World; but with a certain expectation of all manner of Torments and Deaths; and the greatest part of the Known World, was converted to the Belief of it, and became Christians; when in this World, Christians were of all Men the most miserable, and were supported only by the steadfast hope and expectation of that Happiness which is promised to us in the Scriptures after this Life. And all things

things considered, we have as sufficient Grounds for the Authority of the Scriptures, as we have, not only that any other Book was composed by the Author, whose Name it bears, but as we have to believe any thing else in the World. Now what do these Men? How do they receive so great a Blessing? Why, they overlook all the Evidence that can be brought to prove the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and search up and down for doubtful and obscure Passages to disprove it by; not considering in the mean time, that nothing can overthrow their Authority, but that which can invalidate the Evidence, by which it is establish'd. It would be the highest Folly and Ingratitude thus to despise God's Mercy and Care over us, if there were no danger in it, but it being a thing of infinite Danger, it is no less than Madness: For what milder Term can be found to express the desperate Folly of them, who reject a Book, which sets before us the means of Salvation, but at the same time forewarns us upon pain of the severest effects of God's Displeasure, not to neglect them: It is madness, I say, if we rightly consider it, to reject such a Book, and at once both to affront the Mercy, and despise the Threatnings of the infinitely Merciful, and the infinitely Great and Powerful God.

It is a good Caution to the Atheist to forbear his Blasphemies, and Contempt of the
Divine

Divine Majesty, for fear it should prove true, that there is a God, at last, and then it will be a dismal thing after all his profane Talking and Arguing to be called before that God, whom he has so often denied. And it is as good Advice to those, who make it their business to find Fault with the Scriptures, to consider seriously whether they are sure that these are not God's Word, after all that can be said against them; and if they be not absolutely certain of this, the Name and Title, which they bear, and which Men as wise and as Judicious as themselves, thought to belong to them, should methinks keep Men within some bounds of Modesty, and Discretion. For if they be indeed the Word of God (and nothing is capable of being made more evident) than how dearly must they pay for a little cavilling Wit and Subtilty! The best and most Divine things may be despised and affronted by a bold and Scurrilous Wit, but can Men think it a safe or a prudent thing to ridicule and Scoff at those Books, which, for ought they know, may be of Divine Revelation, when all the Reason, of which they fancy themselves so great Masters, can never be able to confute the Arguments brought in Vindication of them? Can they value the contemptible Reputation of a little Satyr and Drollery, at that mighty Rate, as to run the hazard of being damned for it?

If

If Men have any real Doubts or Scruples, they must needs grant, that it is too serious a thing to jest and trifle withal, when no less than the Terms of our everlasting Happiness, or everlasting Misery is the thing in Controversy. And what Wit there may be in it, I cannot tell; but I am sure it is no sign of a very Wise Man to speak contemptibly of a Book, by which he can never prove, but that he must be judged at the last Day. *As a Mad-Man, says Solomon, who casteth Fire-brands, Arrows, and Death; so is the Man that deceiveth his Neighbour, and saith, Am not I in Sport? Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.* But what Description or Comparison can be found equal to his Madness, who deceiveth and destroyeth himself, and that Eternally, and yet says, Am not I in Sport? Is not this the very perfection of Wit and Raillery?

Wo unto him, that Striveth with his Maker Isai. xlv. 9. Do they provoke me to anger, saith the Lord, do they not provoke themselves to the Confusion of their own Faces? Jer. vii. 19. And thou shalt know, that I am the Lord, and that I have heard all thy Blasphemies. Thus with your Mouth ye have boasted against me, and have Multiplied your Words against me, I have heard them, Ezek. xxxv. 12, 13. Do we provoke the Lord to Jealousy, are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. x. 22.

There shall come in the last days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts, 2 Pet. iii. 3.

But

But Beloved, remember ye the Words, which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you, there should be Mockers in the last time, who should Walk after their own ungodly Lusts, Jude 17. 18. If all that I have discoursed be insufficient to convince these Men; yet let their own Arguments, and even their own Blasphemies convince them; for the very worst that they can say or do, serves to fulfil the Prophecies, and confirm the Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

FINIS.

A D D E N D A.

The BOOK having been long ago fitted for the Press, and out of the Author's Custody; he could not insert the following Additions in their proper places.

CHAP. IV. p. 112. l. 3. after St. Mark and St. Luke add, If either in the Epistle of St. Barnabas, or St. Clement, it be supposed that the Reasoning is not always just, but is sometimes too Allegorical, and sometimes founded upon Mistakes in Natural Philosophy; yet it is certainly agreeable to the ways of Reasoning, and the Philosophy of that Age, so that nothing of this kind could then be any hindrance or prejudice to the Reception of these Epistles.

CHAP. X. p. 222. l. ult. after Principles, add, And besides other Uses, which may be found out hereafter, one very considerable has been already made of the *Satellites*, for the benefit of the World, in rectifying Geography, and determining the Longitude of Places, (a) *M. Cassini* has drawn up Tables for this Purpose, and Written a Treatise on

P p

(a) *Philos.*
Burgund.
Tom. 5.
c. 8. Dis-
sert.

(b) Le Compté's Memoire, p. 15. and 505. the Subject. And the (b) Missionaries by their Observations, have discovered, that the Empire of China is Five Hundred Leagues nearer Europe, than Geographers have placed it.

CHAP. XI. p. 226. l. 27. after Opinion, add. The same Words which Joshua used, is Translated to wait upon, and wait for, Pl. LXII. 1. LXV. 1. So that all which can be Concluded from the Word is, that the Sun attended, he lengthned the Day, and waited for the Victory, or waited upon the Army of Israel.

CHAP. XIII. p. 256. l. 24. after Christ's sake; add, A State of Damnation is a State of Death; and the Soul which lies under the Divine Wrath, is in that State, tho' it be not irreversibile during this Life. So that the Death Threatned, being Twofold, viz. of the Soul, and of the Body, it was accordingly inflicted on both: But it was not Threatned, that this Death should be to the final Destruction either of Soul or Body; but thro' the Redemption of Christ, the Body might be recovered from the Death, to which it became Subject, to a Blessed and Glorious Resurrection, and the Soul be restored from the Death, into which it had fallen, to a State of Reconciliation and Favour with God.

CHAP. XV, p. 325. l. 15. after in the New, add, Of the Assistance of Divine Grace, we

we are Taught, Deutr. XXX. 6. Psalm. XXV. 4. XXVII. 11. LI. 10, 11, 12. LXXXVI. 11. CXIX. 12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68. 108. 124. 135. CXLIII. 10. Prov. 1. 23. Isa. XLIV. 3. LIX. 21. Jer. XXXI. 8. XXXII. 40. Ezek. XI. 19. XXXVI. 26, 27.

CHAP. XVI. p. 338. l. 10. after Religion, add, The Sovereignty was in due time to be placed in the Tribe of Judah; which was fulfilled in David's being advanced to the Kingdom, and from that time the Scepter and the Lawgiver, &c.

CHAP. XXII. p. 391. l. 5. after expected, add, The Duration of the World is considered in the Scriptures, with relation to Christ's coming, and all the Time after his coming is stiled the last Days; as in the Description of the Different States of Job's Life, the space of an Hundred and Forty Years of it, after his Sufferings, is stiled the latter end of his Life; and all the precedent part is Termed the Beginning of it. Job. XXXII. 12, 16.

CHAP. XXVIII. p. 426. l. 1. after the prophet Jonas, add, Dr. Lightfoot in his late lately published, has observed, in the Reason, why the Jews were so impatient for a Sign, notwithstanding the many Miracles which our Saviour wrought in their Sight: That their Traditions taught them to expect these two Signs of the Messiah, when he came, viz. that he should raise the Dead

Prophets, and other Holy and famous Men from the Dead, and that he should bring down *Manna* for them from Heaven. In their Old Writings and Records, he says, they speak much of these Two things of their Expectation. I am inclined to believe that these Traditions, if they had been rightly understood, were not so blind and foolish, as that Learned Author Stiles them, but had respect to the very Time and Occasion, to which our Saviour refers the Jews, when they required these Signs of him. For at his Resurrection many Bodies of Saints, which Slept; arose, *Matt. xxvii. 52.* And speaking to them of the *Manna*, or Bread which came down from Heaven, he puts them in Mind of his Ascension: *What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? Joh. vi. 62.* Whereby he intimates, that then would be the time of sending this *Manna*, when upon his Ascension, he would bestow the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The time was not yet come for these Miracles to be wrought, they were not to be wrought at their Demand; it was sufficient that they had Intimations given to expect them, and in the mean time they ought to have been contented with others.

CHAP. XXX. p. 519. l. 12. after he pleased, add, But it seems most of all strange, that the excellent Emperour, *M. Antoninus*, who had so much of the Christian Morality,

both in the Speculation, and in the Practice of it, should not also be of the Christian Faith, especially, if he owned, that a signal Miracle was by the Prayers of the Christians, obtained for the deliverance of himself, and his whole Army, (a) as *Tertullian*, who could not be Ignorant of the Truth of it, declares. (a) Apol. c. 5. ad Scap. c. 4.

But it should be considered, that *M. Antoninus* was very superstitious in all the Heathen Worship, and was so much addicted to the (b) *Sophists* of his time, as not only to endure, but often to humour, their Insolence and Vanity; and from them he had his Notions of Philosophy, which agree with the Christian Doctrine, and not from the Scriptures. For he owns in his Book, from whom he had received his Precepts; but if he had Read and considered the Scriptures, he could never have looked upon the Zeal and Fortitude of the Christian Martyrs, as (c) *Obstinacy*. (b) Philostr. Vit. Sophist. in Herod. Hermag. Aristid. Adrian. (c) Lib. 11. § 3. But the *Sophists* who made it their business to oppose the Gospel, knew, they could not better recommend themselves to him, than by Teaching its Moral Doctrines, and preventing that esteem, which he must needs have had of the Christian Religion, if he had known, that to this those Doctrines, which he so much admired, owed either their Original or Improvement.

Whatever opinion he had of the Christians, he was wont to attribute too much to his

(d) *Vulcat* his own (d) Virtue and Piety, to ascribe his deliverance wholly to their Prayers. And after all the Praises, which have been justly given to *M. Antonius*, it must be acknowledged, that he valued himself extremely upon Two Things, which were very great hindrances to his Reception of the Gospel. *viz.* The (e) Study of Philosophy, and the Love and esteem of his People. For it is no Wonder, that an Emperour, who made the Philosophy of those times his Study, the *Sophists* his chief Favourites, and Popularity his Aim, should not be Converted to a Religion so unpopular, and so opposite, in some of its Principal Articles, to that which the World called Wisdom,

It is unconceivable upon what Principles of Religion or Philosophy this Emperour could Deify (f) *Lucius Verus* and *Faustina*; but it was impossible, that he could do this, and be at the same time a Christian; that the same Man, who Deified Notorious Wickedness, because it had been Cloathed in Purple, and shined in Imperial Robes, should believe in the Son of God Crucified, is utterly inconsistent.

(f) *id.* *IB. p. 527. l. 3. after at all, add, (a) Victorinus*, a Man of very great Learning, and who, upon that account, had his Statue erected in the *Forum* at *Rome*; often acknowledged himself convinced of the Truth of Christianity, before he could be persuaded openly

penly to profess it, for fear of displeasing his Friends that were Gentiles. He pretended he might be a Christian as well in Secret, and this no doubt might be the case of many others, who never made open Profession of it.

IB. p. 530. l. 7. after with them add, The Doctrines of the Epicureans and the Stoicks (he speaks of such as were peculiar to either Sect, were little regarded in *St. Austin's* time; and none durst maintain them, but under the Denomination of some Heresy or other; these Two Sects, then were in so little esteem, that they had not Authority enough to give those errors any countenance, which they before had so long with great subtilty and success defended against the *Platonists*; but they who would gain any Reception to their errors were at last forced to assume the Name of Christians, and betake themselves to some Heresy. Of *Plotinus's* School some became Christians, and others applied themselves to Magick; as *Plotinus* himself must have done, if we believe all that *Porphyry* Writes of him. The Relation of the Serpent, which was seen under the Bed and then was observed creeping into a hole of the Wall, as he gave up the Ghost, is an odd Story.

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