

AN *Revised*  
ABRIDGMENT  
OF  
Mr. *Locke*'s  
ESSAY  
CONCERNING  
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.



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The SEVENTH EDITION, Corrected.

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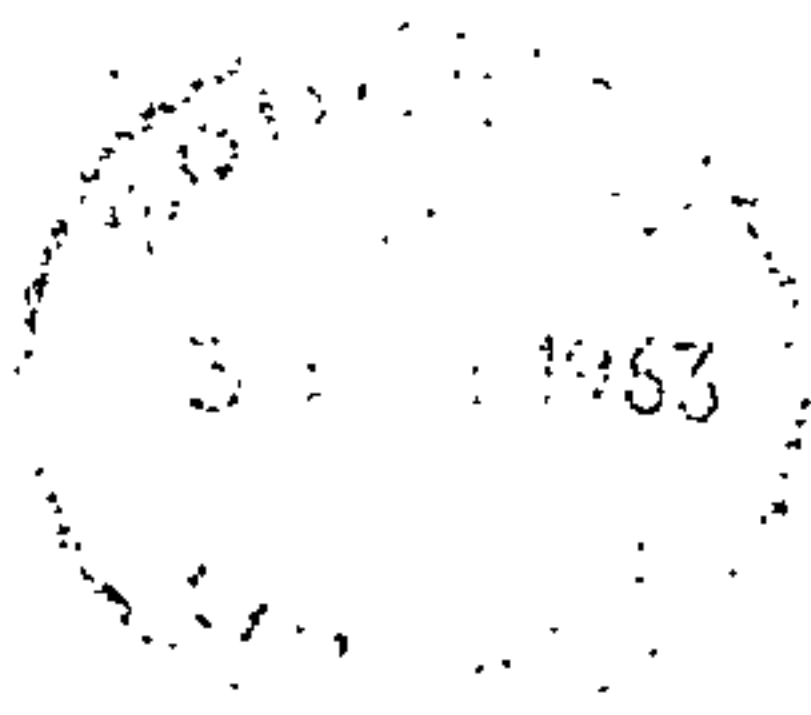
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*Baker*  
*Baker*

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To the much Esteemed

Mr. *JOHN LOCKE.*

*Honoured Sir,*

**I** Send you this imperfect Draught of your excellent *Essay* concerning *Human Understanding*; which, I must confess, falls as much short of the Perfection, as it does of the Length of the Original. Nevertheless, as I lately intimated to you (and you were pleased to think, that what I proposed in Reference to this Design, would not be wholly lost Labour) I am not without Hopes, that it may in this contracted *Form*, prove in some Measure serviceable to that noble End, which you have so successfully aimed at in it, viz. *The Advancement of real and useful Knowledge*. The Inducement which moved me to think of abridging it, was a Consideration purely extrinsical to the Work itself, and in

## D E D I C A T I O N.

Effect no other than this; that it would be better suited to the Ease and Convenience of some Sort of Readers, when reduced into this narrow Compass. In Order to this, I thought the *First Book*, which is employed in refuting the common Opinion of *innate Notions* and *Ideas*, might be best spared in this Abridgment; especially since the Reader may be convinced by what he shall find here, that such a Supposition is at least needless, in Regard he may attain to all the Knowledge he has, or finds himself capable of, without the Help of any such *innate Ideas*. Besides this, I have retrenched most of the larger Explications; and some useful Hints, and instructive Theories I have wholly omitted; not because they are less considerable in themselves, but because they seemed not so necessary to be insisted on in an *Abridgment*, it being considered as a previous Instrument, and preparatory Help to guide and conduct the Mind in its *Search after Truth and Knowledge*, which is so effectually accomplished in the Original, that it must be considered as the highest of Neglects, in those who omit the fair Opportunity you have given them. The Importance of some Chapters has laid me under the Necessity of giving them entire, while in others not more is omitted, than the Recapitulation of their Sub-



## D E D I C A T I O N.

Subjects, which from the Influence you had over it, they have apprehended in different Lights. This I hope will prove no Prejudice to the *Essay* itself, since none, I presume, will think it reasonable to form a Judgment of the whole Work from an Abridgment of it; for as far as a Copy is removed from its Original, so far is it distant from Authenticity, since this universally holds good, in what other Light can an Abridgment be esteemed but in that which has been already mentioned, that of preparing the Mind for a Free Conception of the Original. And I persuade myself, that few *Readers* will be content with this *Epitome*, who can conveniently furnish themselves with the *Essay* at large. However, I am apt to think, that this alone will serve to make the Way to Knowledge somewhat more plain and easy; and afford such Helps for the Improvement of Reason, as are perhaps in vain sought after in those Books, which profess to teach the *Art of Reasoning*: But nevertheless, whether you shall think fit to let it come abroad under the Disadvantages that attend it in this *Form*, I must leave you to judge. I shall only add, that I think my own Pains abundantly recompensed by the agreeable as well as instructive Entertainment, which this nearer View and closer Inspection into your *Essay* afforded

DEDICATION.

afforded me : And I am not a little pleased, that it has given me this Opportunity of expressing the just Value and Esteem I have for it, as well as the Honour and Respect I have for its Author.

I am,

Oxon, Ap. 17,  
1695.

*Honoured S I R,*

*Your very Humble*

*And Obliged Servant,*

JOHN WYNNE.

THE

Bahner  
H. H. H.

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T H E

INTRODUCTION.

I. **S**INCE it is the *Understanding* that sets Man above the Rest of sensible Beings, and gives him all the Advantage and Dominion which he has over them; it is certainly a Subject, even for its Nobleness, worth the enquiring into.

II. My Purpose therefore is to enquire into the *Original, Certainty, and Extent* of Human Knowledge; together with the Grounds and Degrees of *Belief, Opinion, and Assent*, which I shall do in the following Method.

III. *First*, I shall enquire into the *Original* of those *Ideas* or *Notions*, which a Man observes, and is conscious to himself he has in his Mind, and the *Ways* whereby the *Understanding* comes to be furnished with them.

*Secondly*, What *Knowledge* the *Understanding* hath by those *Ideas*; and the *Certainty, Evidence, and Extent* of it.

*Thirdly*,

## ii *The INTRODUCTION.*

*Thirdly*, I shall make some Enquiry into the Nature and Grounds of *Faith* and *Opinion*.

IV. If by this Enquiry into the Nature of the Understanding, I can discover the Powers thereof, *how far* they reach, and where they fail us, it may be of Use to prevail with the busy Mind of Man to be more cautious in meddling with Things exceeding its Comprehension, to stop when it is at the utmost Extent of its Ability; and to sit down in a quiet Ignorance of those Things, which upon Examination are found to be beyond the Reach of our Capacities. We should not then perhaps be so forward out of an Affectation of *Universal Knowledge*, to perplex ourselves with Disputes about Things to which our Understandings are not suited; and of which we cannot frame in our Minds any clear or distinct Perceptions, or whereof (as it has perhaps too often happened) we have not any Notions at all: But should learn to content ourselves with what is attainable by us in this State.

V. For though the *Comprehension* of our Understanding comes exceeding short of the vast Extent of Things; yet we shall have Cause enough to magnify the bountiful  
ful

ful *Author* of our Being, for that Portion and Degree of Knowledge he has bestowed on us so far above all the rest of the Inhabitants of this our Mansion. Men have Reason to be well satisfied with what God hath thought fit for them, since he has given them (as St. *Peter* says, πάντα πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ ἐκτέλειαν ) whatsoever is necessary for the Conveniencies of *Life*, and Information of *Virtue*; and has put within the Reach of their Discovery, the comfortable Provision for this Life, and the Way that leads to a better. How short soever their Knowledge may come of an universal, or perfect Comprehension of whatever is, it yet secures their great Concernments, that they have Light enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their *Maker*, and the Sight of their own *Duties*. Men may find Matter sufficient to busy their Heads, and employ their Hands with Variety, Delight and Satisfaction; if they will not boldly quarrel with their own Constitution, and throw away the Blessings their Hands are filled with, because they are not big enough to grasp every Thing. We shall not have much Reason to complain of the Narrowness of our Minds, if we will but employ them about what may be of Use to us; for of that they are very capable: And it will be an unpardonable, as well as childish Peevishness,



Peevishness, if we undervalue the Advantages of our Knowledge, and neglect to improve it to the Ends for which it was given us, because there are some Things that are set out of the Reach of it. It will be no Excuse to an idle and untoward Servant, who would not attend his Business by Candle-light, to plead that he had not broad Sunshine. The Candle that is set up in us, shines bright enough for all our Purposes. The Discoveries we can make with this, ought to satisfy us. And we shall then use our Understandings right, when we entertain all Objects in the Way and Proportion, that they are suited to our Faculties; and upon those Grounds they are capable of being proposed to us; and not peremptorily or intemperately require *Demonstration*, and demand *Certainty*, where *Probability* only is to be had, and which is sufficient to govern all our Concernments. If we will disbelieve every Thing, because we cannot certainly know all Things; we shall do as wisely as he did who would not use his Legs, but sat still and perished because he had not Wings to fly.

VI. When we know our own *Strength*, we shall the better know what to undertake with Hopes of Success. And when we have well surveyed the *Powers* of our own Minds,  
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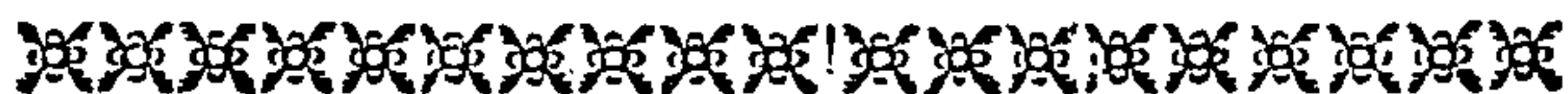


we shall not be inclined either to sit still, and not set our Thoughts on Work, in despair of knowing any Thing; nor on the other Side, question every Thing, and disclaim all Knowledge, because some Things are not to be understood. Our *Business* here, is not to know all Things, but those Things which concern our Conduct. If we can find out those Measures whereby a *rational Creature*, put into that State which Man is in, in this World, may and ought to govern his Opinions and Actions depending thereon, we need not be troubled that some other Things escape our Knowledge.

VII. This was that which gave the first *Rise* to this *Essay* concerning the Understanding. For I thought that the first Step towards satisfying several Enquiries the Mind of Man was very apt to run into, was to take a Survey of *our Understandings*, examine our own *Powers*, and see to what Things they were adapted. Till that was done, I suspected we began at the wrong End, and in vain sought for Satisfaction in a quiet and secure Possession of Truths that most concerned us, whilst we let loose our Thoughts in the vast *Ocean* of Being, as if all that boundless Extent were the natural and undoubted Possessions of our Understanding.

standings; wherein there was nothing exempt from its Decisions, or that escaped its Comprehension. Thus Men extending their Enquiries beyond their Capacities, and letting their Thoughts wander into those Depths where they can find no sure Footing, it is no wonder that they raise *Questions*, and multiply *Disputes*, which never coming to any clear Resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their Doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect *Scepticism*. Whereas were the Capacities of our Understandings well considered, the Extent of our Knowledge once discovered, and the *Horizon* found, which sets Bounds between the enlightened and dark Parts of Things, between what is, and what is not comprehensible by us, Men would perhaps with less Scruple acquiesce in the avowed Ignorance of the *One*, and employ their Thoughts and Discourse, with more Advantage and Satisfaction in the *Other*.

*ence of God, by Demonstration; and of other Things, by Sensation. As for our own Existence, we perceive it so plainly, that it neither needs, nor is capable of any Proof. I think; I reason; I feel Pleasure and Pain: Can any of these be more evident to me than my own Existence? If I doubt of all other Things, that very Doubt makes me perceive my own Existence, and will not suffer me to doubt of that. If I know I doubt, I have as certain a Perception of the Thing doubting, as of that Thought which I call Doubt. Experience then convinces us that we have an intuitive Knowledge of our own Existence; and an internal infallible Perception that we are. In every Act of Sensation, Reasoning or Thinking, we are conscious to ourselves of our own Being, and in this Matter come not short of the highest Degree of Certainty.*



## C H A P. X.

*Of our Knowledge of the Existence of a God.*

**T**HOUGH *God* has given us no *innate Ideas* of himself; though he has stamped no original Characters on our Minds, wherein we may read his Being; yet having furnished us with those Faculties our Minds are endowed with, he hath not left himself without a *Witness*, since we have Sense, Perception, and Reason, and cannot want a clear Proof of him, as long as we carry ourselves about us: Nor can we justly complain of our Ignorance in this great Point, since he has so plentifully provided us  
with

with Means to discover, and know him, so far as is necessary to the End of our Being, and the great Concernment of our Happiness. But though, this be the most obvious Truth that Reason discovers, and though its Evidence be, if I mistake not, equal to Mathematical Certainty; yet it requires Thought and Attention: And the Mind must apply itself to a regular Deduction of it, from some Part of our *intuitive* Knowledge, or else we shall be as ignorant of this as of other Propositions which are in themselves capable of clear Demonstration. To shew therefore, that we are capable of knowing, that is, *being certain*, that *there is a God*; and how we may come by this Certainty, I think we need go no farther than ourselves, and that undoubted Knowledge we have of our own *Existence*.

I think it is beyond Question, that *Man has a clear Perception of his own Being*: He knows certainly that he exists, and that he is something. In the next Place, Man knows by an *intuitive* Certainty, that *bare Nothing can no more produce any real Being, than it can be equal to two right Angles*. If therefore we know there is some real Being, it is an evident Demonstration, that *from Eternity there has been Something*; since what was not from Eternity, had a Beginning; and what had a Beginning must be produced by something else. Next it is evident, that *what has its Being from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its Being from another too*: All the Powers it has, must be owing to, and received from the same Source. This eternal Source then of all Being must be  
also



also the Source and Original of all Power; and so this *Eternal Being* must be also the *most powerful*.

Again, Man finds in himself *Perception* and *Knowledge*: We are certain then, that there is not *ly* some Being, but some knowing, intelligent Being in the World. There was a Time then, when there was no knowing Being, and when Knowledge began to be; or else there has been a knowing Being from Eternity. If it be said, there was a Time when that eternal Being had no Knowledge; I reply, that then it is impossible there should ever have been any Knowledge: It being as impossible that Things wholly void of Knowledge, and operating blindly, and without any Perception, should produce a knowing Being, as it is that a Triangle should make itself three Angles, bigger than two right ones.

Thus from the Consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our own Constitutions, our Reason leads us to the Knowledge of this certain and evident Truth, that *there is an eternal, most powerful, and knowing Being*, which, whether any one will please to call God, it matters not. The Thing is evident, and from this Idea duly considered, will easily be deduced all those other *Attributes* we ought to ascribe to this *eternal Being*.

From what has been said, it is plain to me we have a more certain Knowledge of the Existence of a *God*, than of any Thing our Senses have not immediately discovered to us. Nay I presume I may say, that we more certainly know  
that

that there is a *God*, than that there is any Thing else without us. When I say, we know, I *mean*, there is such a Knowledge within our Reach, which we cannot miss, if we will but apply our Minds to that; as we do to several other Enquiries. For the *invisible Things of God are clearly seen from the Creation of the World, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and God head.*

It being then unavoidable for all rational Creatures to conclude, that *Something has existed from Eternity*; let us next see what *Kind of Thing* that must be. There are but two Sorts of Beings in the World, that Man knows or conceives: *First*, Such as are purely material, without Sense or Perception, as the Clippings of our Beards, and Parings of our Nails. *Secondly*, Sensible perceiving Beings; such as we find ourselves to be. These two Sorts we shall hereafter call *cogitative* and *incogitative* Beings: Which to our present Purpose are better than *material* and *immaterial*.

If then there must be something *eternal*, it is very obvious to Reason, that it must necessarily be a *cogitative* Being; because it is as impossible to conceive that ever bare *incogitative* Matter should produce a *thinking* intelligent Being, as that Nothing should of itself produce Matter. Let us suppose any Parcel of Matter *eternal*, we shall find it in itself unable to produce any Thing. Let us suppose its Parts firmly at rest together: If there were no other Being in the World, must it not eternally remain so, a dead unactive Lump? Is it possible to conceive it can  
add



add Motion to itself, or produce any Thing? *Matter* then by its own Strength cannot produce in itself, so much as *Motion*. The Motion it has must also be from Eternity, or else added to Matter by some other Being, more powerful than Matter: Matter, as is evident, having not Power to produce Motion in itself. But let us suppose Motion eternal too, yet Matter, *incognitive* Matter and Motion could never produce *Thought*: *Knowledge* will still be as far beyond the *Power* of *Motion* and *Matter* to produce, as Matter is beyond the Power of Nothing to produce. And I appeal to every one's own Thoughts, whether he cannot as easily conceive Matter produced by *nothing*, as Thought to be produced by pure Matter, when before there was no such Thing as Thought, or an intelligent Being existing. Divide *Matter* into as minute Parts, as you will, vary the Figure and Motion of it, as much as you please, it will operate no otherwise upon other Bodies of proportionable Bulk, than it did before this Division. The minutest Particles of Matter, knock, impel, and resist one another, just as the greater do, and that is all they can do, so that if we will suppose *nothing eternal*, *Matter can never begin to be*. If we suppose *bare Matter* without Motion, *eternal Motion can never begin to be*. If we suppose only Matter and Motion eternal, *Thought can never begin to be*: For it is impossible to conceive, that Matter either with or without Motion, could have originally in and from itself, Sense, Perception, and Knowledge, as is evident from hence, that then Sense, Perception and Knowledge, must be a Property eternally inseparable from Matter  
and

and every Particle of it. Since therefore whatsoever is the first eternal Being, must necessarily be *cogitative*; and whatsoever is *first* of all Things, must necessarily contain in it, and actually have, at least, all the Perfections that can ever after exist, it necessarily follows, that the *first eternal Being cannot be Matter*.

If therefore it be evident that something necessarily must exist from Eternity, it is also evident that, that *something must necessarily be a cogitative Being*. For it is as impossible that *incogitative Matter* should produce a *cogitative Being*, as that Nothing, or the Negation of all Being, should produce a positive Being or Matter.

This Discovery of the necessary Existence of an eternal Mind, does sufficiently lead us into the Knowledge of *God*. For it will hence follow, that all other knowing Beings, that have a Beginning, must depend on him, and have no other Ways of Knowledge or Extent of Power, than what he gives them: And therefore if he made those, he made also the less excellent Pieces of this Universe, all *inanimate Bodies*, whereby his *Omniſcience, Power, and Providence* will be eſtabliſhed, and from thence all his other Attributes neceſſarily follow.

C H A P.

have this Satisfaction in doing his Duty as a rational Creature, that though he should miss Truth, he will not miss the Reward of it: For he governs his Assent right, and places it as he should, who in any Case or Matter whatsoever, believes or disbelieves according as *Reason* directs him. He that does otherwise, transgresses against his own Light, and misuses those Faculties which were given him to no other End, but to search and follow the clearer Evidence, and greater Probability. But since *Reason* and *Faith* are by some Men opposed, we will so consider them in the following *Chapter*.



## C H A P. XVIII.

*Of Faith and Reason, and their distinct Provinces.*

**F**ROM what has been just related, it is evident, 1. That we are of Necessity ignorant, and want Knowledge of all Sorts, where we want Ideas. 2. That we are ignorant, and want rational Knowledge, where we want Proofs. 3. That we want general Knowledge and Certainty, as far as we want clear and determined specific Ideas. 4. That we want Probability to direct our Assent in Matters where we have neither Knowledge of our own, nor Testimony of other Men to ground our Reason upon.

From these Things thus premised, I think we may come to lay down the Measures and Boundaries between Faith and Reason: The Want whereof may possibly have been the Cause,

Cause, if not of great Disorders, yet at least of great Disputes, and perhaps Mistakes in the World: For till it be resolved how far we are to be guided by Reason, and how far by Faith, we shall in vain dispute, and endeavour to convince one another in Matters of Religion.

I find every Sect, as far as Reason will help them, make use of it gladly; and where it fails them, they cry out, *It is Matter of Faith, and above Reason.* And I do not see how they can argue with any one, or ever convince a Gain-sayer, who makes Use of the same Plea, without setting down strict Boundaries between Faith and Reason, which ought to be the first Point established in all Questions, where Faith has any Thing to do.

*Reason*, as opposed to *Faith*, I take to be the Discovery of the *Certainty* or *Probability* of such Propositions or Truths which the Mind arrives at by Deductions made from such *Ideas*, which it has got by the Use of its natural Faculties, *viz.* by *Sensation* or *Reflection*.

*Faith*, on the other Side, is the Assent to any Proposition, not thus made out by the Deductions of Reason, but upon the Credit of the Proposer, as coming from God, in some extraordinary Way of Communication. This Way of discovering Truths to Men, we call *Revelation*.

*First*, That no Man inspired by God, can by any Revelation communicate to others, any new simple Idea, which they had not before from  
O Sensa-



*Sensation or Reflection*: For whatsoever Impressions he himself may have from the immediate Hand of God, this Revelation, if it be of new simple Ideas, cannot be conveyed to another, either by Words, or any other Signs, for Words, by their immediate Operation on us, cause no other Ideas but of their natural Sounds; and as *Signs* of latent Ideas they can only recal to our Thoughts those Ideas, which to us they have been wont to be Signs of; but cannot introduce any new, and formerly unknown simple Ideas. The same holds good in all other *Signs*, which cannot signify to us Things of which we never before had any Idea.

Thus whatever Things were discovered to St. Paul when he was taken up into the third Heaven, whatever new Ideas his Mind there received, all the Description he could give to others of that Place, was only this, that there are such Things as *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*. The great Creator has limited the human Species of this lower World to five Senses, it cannot be supposed as an Impossibility that others of his Creatures else where Inhabitants, may be endowed with an additional Sense, of whose Perception we cannot have any Conception; as for our simple Ideas we must depend for them wholly upon our natural Faculties, and can by no Means receive them from *traditional Revelation*; I say *traditional*, in Distinction to *original Revelation*. By the *one*, I mean that Impression which is made immediately by God on the Mind of any Man, to which we cannot set any Bounds. And by the *other*, those Impressions deliver-

delivered over to others in Words, and the ordinary Ways of conveying our Conceptions one to another.

*Secondly*, I say, that *the same Truths may be discovered by Revelation, which are discoverable to us by Reason*; but in such there is little Occasion for or Use of *Revelation*; God having furnished us with natural Means to arrive at the Knowledge of them: And Truths discovered by our natural Faculties, are more certain, than when conveyed to us by *traditional Revelation*. For the Knowledge we have, that this *Revelation* came at first from God, can never be so sure as the Knowledge we have from the clear and distinct Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our own Ideas. This also holds in Matters of Fact, knowable by our Senses: As the *History* of the *Dcluge* is conveyed to us by Writings, which had their Original from *Revelation*; and yet no Body, I think, will say he has as certain and clear Knowledge of the *Flood*, as *Noah* that saw it, or that he himself would have had, had he then been alive and seen it. For he has no greater Assurance, than that of his *Senses*, that it is written in the Book supposed to have been written by *Moses* when inspired. But he has not so great an Assurance that *Moses* wrote that Book, as if he had seen *Moses* write it; so that the Assurance of its being a *Revelation*, is still less than the Assurance of his *Senses*.

*Revelation* cannot be admitted against the clear Evidence of *Reason*. For since no Evidence of our Faculties, by which we receive such a *Revelation*, can exceed, if equal the



Certainty of our *intuitive* Knowledge; we can never receive for a Truth any Thing that is directly contrary to our clear and distinct Knowledge. Thus the Ideas of *one Body* and *one Place*, do so clearly agree, that we can never assent to a Proposition that affirms *the same Body to be in two distinct Places at once*; however, it should pretend to the Authority of a divine Revelation: Since the Evidence, *First*, That we deceive not ourselves in ascribing it to God: *Secondly*, That we understand it right, can never be so great as the Evidence of our own *intuitive* Knowledge, whereby we discern it impossible for *the same Body to be in two Places at once*.

In Propositions therefore, contrary to our distinct and clear Ideas, it will be in vain to urge them as Matters of Faith. For Faith can never convince us of any Thing that contradicts our Knowledge. Because, though Faith be founded upon the Testimony of God, who cannot lie, yet we cannot have an Assurance of the Truth of its being a *divine Revelation*, greater than our own Knowledge. For if the Mind of Man can never have a clearer Evidence of any Thing to be a *divine Revelation*, than it has of the Principles of its own Reason; it can never have a Ground to quit the clear Evidence of its Reason, to give Place to a Proposition, whose *Revelation* has not a greater Evidence than those Principles have.

In all Things therefore where we have clear Evidence from our Ideas, and the Principles of Knowledge just mentioned, *Reason* is the proper Judge; and *Revelation* cannot in such Cases in-  
validate

validate its Decrees; nor can we be obliged, where we have the clear and evident Sentence of Reason, to quit it for the contrary Opinion, under a Pretence that it is *Matter of Faith*, which can have no Authority against the plain and clear Dictates of *Reason*. But,

*Thirdly*, There being many Things of which we have but imperfect Notions, or none at all; and other Things, of whose past, present, or further Existence, by the natural Use of our Faculties, we can have no Knowledge at all: These being beyond the *Discovery of our Faculties, and above Reason*, when revealed become the *proper Matter of Faith*. Thus, that Part of the Angels rebelled against *God*, and thereby lost their first happy State; that the Bodies of Men shall rise and live again, and the like, are purely Matters of Faith, with which Reason has directly nothing to do.

But since God in giving us the Light of Reason has not thereby debarred himself from affording us, when he thinks fit, the Light of Revelation in any of those Matters, wherein our natural Faculties are able to give a probable Determination; *Revelation*, where God has been pleased to give it, must carry it against the probable Conjectures of Reason, because the Mind, not being certain of the Truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the Probability that appears in it, is bound to give up its Assent to such a Testimony; which, it is satisfied, comes from one who cannot err, and will not deceive. But yet it still belongs to *Reason*, to judge of the Truth of its being a Revelation,

lation, and of the Signification of the Words wherein it is delivered. Indeed, if any Thing shall be thought Revelation, which is contrary to the plain Principles of Reason, and the evident Knowledge the Mind has of its own clear and distinct Ideas, there Reason must be hearkened to, as to a Matter within its Province. Since a Man can never have so certain a Knowledge, that a Proposition, which contradicts the clear Principles and Evidence of his own Knowledge, was divinely revealed, or that he understands the Words rightly; wherein it is delivered, as he has, that the contrary is true; and so is bound to consider and judge of it as a Matter of Reason, and not implicitly believe, as a Matter of Faith, without Examination.

*First* then, Whatever Proposition is revealed, of whose Truth our Mind, by its natural Faculties and Notions cannot judge, that is purely Matter of Faith and above Reason.

*Secondly*, All Propositions, whereof the Mind by its natural Faculties, can come to determine and judge from natural acquired Ideas, are *Matter of Reason*; but with this Difference; that in those concerning which it has but an uncertain Evidence, and so is persuaded of their Truth only upon probable Grounds, which still admit a Possibility of the contrary to be true, without doing Violence to the certain Evidence of its own Knowledge, and overturning the Principles of all Reason, in such probable Propositions; I say, an *evident Revelation ought to determine our Assent*, even against *Probability*. For where the Principles of Reason have not evidenced a Proposition

position to be certainly true or false, there clear Revelation, as another Principle of Truth, and Ground of Assent, may determine; and so it may be *Matter of Faith*, and be also above Reason, because Reason, in that particular Matter, being able to reach no higher than Probability, *Faith* gave the Determination where *Reason* came short; and *Revelation* discovered on which Side the Truth lay.

Thus far the Dominion of Faith reaches; and that without any Violence to *Reason*, which is not injured or disturbed, but assisted and improved by new Discoveries of Truth, coming from the *eternal Fountain* of all Knowledge. Whatever *God* hath revealed is certainly true; no Doubt can be made of it. This is the proper Object of *Faith*: But whether it be a divine Revelation or no, *Reason* must judge; which can never permit the Mind to reject a greater Evidence, to embrace what is less evident, nor prefer less Certainty to the greater. There can be no Evidence, that any traditional *Revelation* is of divine Original, in the Words we receive it, and the Sense we understand it, so clear and so certain, as that of the Principles of *Reason*: And therefore, *Nothing that is contrary to the clear and self-evident Dictates of Reason, has a Right to be urged or assented to, as a Matter of Faith, wherein Reason has not any thing to do.* Whatsoever is divine *Revelation*, ought to overrule all our Opinions, Prejudices and Interests, and hath a Right to be received with a full *Assent*. Such a Submission as this, of our *Reason* to *Faith*, takes not away the Land-marks of Knowledge: This shakes not the Foundation of Reason, but



leaves us that Use of our Faculties, for which they were given us.

If the Provinces of *Faith* and *Reason* are not kept distinct by these Boundaries, there will, in Matters of Religion, be no Room for Reason at all; and those extravagant Opinions and Ceremonies, that are to be found in the several Religions of the World, will not deserve to be blamed. For, to this crying up of Faith, in Opposition to Reason, we may, I think, in good Measure, ascribe those Absurdities that fill almost all the Religions which possess and divide Mankind. For Men having been principled with an Opinion, that they must not consult Reason in the Things of Religion, however apparently contradictory to common Sense, and the very Principles of all their Knowledge, have let loose their Fancies, and natural Superstition; and have been, by them, led into so strange Opinions, and extravagant Practices in Religion, that a considerate Man cannot but stand amazed at their Follies, and judge them so far from being acceptable to the great and wise God, that he cannot avoid thinking them ridiculous, and offensive to a sober good Man. So that, in Effect, Religion, which should most distinguish us from Beasts, and ought most peculiarly to elevate us, as rational Creatures, above Brutes, is that wherein Men often appear most irrational, and more senseless than Beasts themselves. *Credo, quia impossibile est: I believe, because it is impossible*, might, in a good Man, pass for a Sally of Zeal; but would prove a very ill Rule for Men to chuse their Opinions, or Religion by.

C H A P.



## C H A P. XIX.

*Of Enthusiasm.*

**H**E that would seriously set about the Search of 'Truth, ought in the first Place to prepare his Mind with a Love of it. For he that loves it not, will not take much Pains to acquire it, nor be much concerned when he loses it. There is no one who does not profess himself a Lover of 'Truth, and that would not take it amiss to be thought otherwise. And yet notwithstanding one may truly say, there are very few Lovers of 'Truth for Truth's Sake, even amongst those who persuade themselves that they are so. How a Man may know whether he be so in earnest, is worthy Enquiry: And I think there is this one unerring Mark of it, *viz.* 'The not entertaining any Proposition with greater Assurance than the Proofs it is built upon will warrant. Whoever goes beyond this Measure of Assent, 'tis plain receives not 'Truth in the Love of it: For the Evidence that any Proposition is true (except such as are self-evident) lying only in the Proofs a Man has of it, whatever Degrees of Assent he affords it, beyond the Degrees of that Evidence, 'tis plain all the Assurances that exceed this is owing to some other Affection, and not to the Love of 'Truth. Whatever Credit we give to any Proposition more than it receives from the Principles and Proofs it supports itself upon, is owing to our Inclinations that Way, and is so far a Deviation from the Love of Truth as

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such:



such : Which as it can receive no Evidence from our Passions or Interests, so it should receive no Tincture from them.

The assuming an Authority of Dictating to others, and a Forwardness to prescribe to their Opinions, is a constant Concomitant of this Bias and Corruption of our Judgments. For how can it be otherwise, but that he should be ready to impose on another's Belief, who has already imposed on his own? Who can reasonably expect Arguments and Conviction from him, in Dealing with others, whose Understanding is not accustomed to them in his Dealing with himself? Who does Violence to his own Faculties, tyrannizes over his own Mind, and usurps the Prerogative that belongs to Truth alone, which is to command Assent by only its own Authority, *i. e.* by and in Proportion to that Evidence which it carries with it.

Upon this Occasion I shall consider a third Ground of Assent, which with some Men has the same Authority as either *Faith* or *Reason*, I mean, *Enthusiasm*; which laying aside *Reason*, would set up Revelation without it. Whereby in Effect it takes away both Reason and Revelation, and substitutes in the Room of it, the ungrounded Fancies of a Man's own Brain, and assumes them for a Foundation both of Opinion and Conduct.

Reason is natural Revelation, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge, communicates to Mankind that Portion of Truth which he has laid within the  
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Reach of their natural Faculties. Revelation is natural Reason enlarged by a new Set of Discoveries communicated by God immediately, which Reason vouches the Truth of, by the Testimony and Proofs it gives, that they come from God. So that he that takes away Reason, to make Way for Revelation, puts out the Light of both, and does much the same, as if he would persuade a Man to put out his Eyes, the better to receive the Light of an invisible Star by a Telescope.

Immediate Revelation being a much easier Way for Men to establish their Opinions, and regulate their Conduct, than the tedious Labour of strict Reasoning, it is no Wonder that some have been very apt to pretend to it; especially in such of their Actions and Opinions as they cannot account for by the ordinary Methods of Knowledge and Principles of Reason. Hence we see that in all Ages, Men in whom Melancholy has mixed with Devotion, or whose Conceit of themselves has raised them into an Opinion of a greater Familiarity with God than is allowed others, have often flattered themselves with a Persuasion of an immediate Intercourse with the Almighty, and frequent Communications from the Divine Spirit. Their Minds being thus prepared, whatever Opinion however so groundless comes to settle strongly upon their Fancies, is an Illumination from the Spirit of God; and whatsoever odd Action they find in themselves a strong Inclination to do, that Impulse is concluded to be a Call or Direction from Heaven, and must be obeyed. This I take to be properly *Entlasiasm*, which though rising from the

the Conceit of a warm or overweening Brain, works, where it once gets Footing, more powerfully on the Persuasions and Actions of Men, than either Reason or Revelation, or both together; Men being most forwardly obedient to the Impulses they receive from themselves. Strong Conceit, like a new Principle, carries all easily with it; when got above common Sense, and free from all Restraint of Reason, and Check of Reflection, it is heightened into a divine Authority, in Concurrence with our own Temper and Inclination.

When Men are once got into this Way of immediate Revelation, of Illumination without Search, and of Certainty without Proof, 'tis a hard Matter to get them out of it. Reason is lost upon them, they are above it: They see the *Light* infused into their Understandings, and cannot be mistaken; 'tis clear and visible there, like the Light of bright Sun-shine; shews itself, and needs no other Proof, but its own Evidence: They feel the Hand of God moving them within, and the Impulses of the Spirit, and cannot be mistaken in what they feel. Thus they support themselves, and are sure Reason hath nothing to do with what they see and feel in themselves; what they have a sensible Experience of, admits no Doubt, and needs no other Evidence. This Light from Heaven is strong, clear, and pure; carries its own Demonstration with it; and we may as rationally take a Glow-worm to assist us to discover the Sun, as to examine the celestial Ray by our dim Candle, Reason.

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This is the Way of talking of these Men ; they are sure *because* they are sure : And their Persuasions are right, only because they are strong in them. For when what they say is stripped of the Metaphor of seeing and feeling, this is all it amounts to ; and yet these Similies so impose on them, that they serve them for Certainty in themselves, and Demonstration to others.

But to examine a little soberly this internal Light, and this Feeling on which they build so much. These Men have, they say, clear Light, and they see ; They have an awakened Sense, and they feel : This cannot, they are sure, be disputed them. But here let me ask : Is this seeing the Perception of the Truth of the Proposition, or of this, that it is a Revelation from God ? Is this Feeling a Perception of an Inclination to do something, or of the Spirit of God moving that Inclination ? These are two very different Perceptions, and must be carefully distinguished. I may perceive the Truth of a Proposition, and yet not perceive that it is an immediate Revelation from God. Nay I may perceive I came not by it in a natural Way, without perceiving that it is a Revelation from God. Because there are Spirits, which without being divinely commissioned, may excite those Ideas in me, and make their Connection perceived. So that the Knowledge of any Proposition coming into my Mind I know not how, is not a Perception that it is from God. But however it be called Light and Seeing ; I suppose it is at most but Belief and Assurance. For where  
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a Proposition is known to be true, Revelation is needless. If therefore it be a Proposition which they are persuaded, but do not know to be true, it is not seeing but believing. What I see, I know to be so by the Evidence of the Thing itself: What I believe, I take to be so upon the Testimony of another: But this Testimony I must know to be given, or else what Ground have I of believing? I must see that it is God that reveals this to me, or else I see nothing. The Question then here is, how do I know that God is the Revealer of this to me; that this Impression is made upon my Mind by his holy Spirit, and that therefore I ought to obey it? If I know not this, how great soever my Assurance is, it is groundless: Whatever Light I pretend to, it is but *Enthusiasm*. For whether the Proposition supposed to be revealed, be in itself evidently true, or visibly probable, or by the natural Ways of Knowledge uncertain, the Proposition that must be well-grounded, and manifested to be true, is this, that God is the Revealer of it, and that what I take to be a Revelation, is certainly put into my Mind by him, and is not an Illusion, dropped in by some other Spirit, or raised by my own Fancy. For if I mistake not, these Men receive it for true, because they presume God revealed it. Is it not then incumbent upon them, to examine upon what Grounds they presume it to be a Revelation from God? Or else all their Confidence is mere Presumption; and this Light they are so dazzled with, is nothing but an *ignis fatuus*, that leads them continually round in this Circle. It is a Revelation, because they firmly believe it; and they believe it, because it is a Revelation.

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In all that is of divine Revelation, there is Need of no other Proof, but that it is from God: For he can neither deceive nor be deceived. But how shall it be known that any Proposition in our Minds is a Truth revealed to us by God? Here it is that *Enthusiasm* fails of the Evidence it pretends to. For Men thus possessed boast of a Light, whereby they say they are brought into the Knowledge of this or that Truth. But if they know it to be a Truth, they must know it to be so, either by its own Self Evidence, or by the rational Proofs that make it out to be so. If they know it to be a Truth either of these two Ways, they in vain suppose it to be a Revelation. For thus all Truths of what Kind soever, that Men uninspired are enlightened with, come into their Minds. If they say they know it to be true, because it is a Revelation from God, the Reason is good: But then it will be demanded, how they know it to be a Revelation from God. If they say by the Light it brings with it, I beseech them to consider, whether this be any more, than that it is a Revelation because they strongly believe it to be true. For all the Light they speak of, is but a strong Persuasion of their own Minds that it is a Truth, which is a very unsafe Ground to proceed on, either in our Tenets or Actions.

This cannot be otherwise, whilst Firmness of Persuasion is made the Cause of believing, and Confidence of being in the right, is made an Argument of Truth. St. Paul himself believed he did well, and that he had a Call to it when he persecuted the Christians, whom he confident-  
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ly thought in the wrong: But yet it was he, and not they, who were mistaken. Good Men are Men still, liable to Mistakes, and are sometimes warmly engaged in Errors, which they take for divine Truths, shining in their Minds with the clearest Light.

True Light in the Mind is nothing else but the *Evidence* of the Truth of any Proposition; And if it be not self-evident, all the Light it can have is from Clearness of those Proofs upon which it is received. To talk of any other Light in the Understanding, is to put ourselves in the Dark, or in the Power of the Prince of Darkness, and by our own Consent, to give ourselves up to Delusion, to believe a Lye: For if Strength of Persuasion be the Light which must guide us, I ask how shall any one distinguish between the Delusions of *Satan*, and the Inspirations of the Holy Ghost? He therefore that will not give up himself to Delusion and Error, must bring this Guide of his *Light within* to the Tryal. God when he makes the Prophet, does not unmake the Man. He leaves his Faculties in their natural State, to enable him to judge of his Inspirations, whether they be of divine Original or no. If he would have us assent to the Truth of any Proposition, he either evidences that Truth by the usual Methods of natural Reason, or else makes it known to be a Truth which he would have us assent to by his Authority; and convinces us that it is from him, by some Marks, which Reason cannot be mistaken in. Reason must be our last Judge and Guide in every Thing. I do not mean that we must consult Reason, and examine whether a  
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Proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural Principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it: But consult it we must, and by it examine, whether it be a Revelation from God or no; and if Reason finds it to be revealed from God, Reason then declares for it, as much as for any other Truth, and makes it one of her Dictates. Every Conceit that thoroughly warms our Fancies must pass for an Inspiration, if there be nothing but the Strength of our Persuasions whereby to judge of them: If Reason must not examine their Truth by something extrinſical to the Persuasions themselves, Inspirations and Delusions, Truth and Falſhood, will have the ſame Measure, and will not be poſſible to be diſtinguiſhed.

If this internal Light, or any Proposition which under that Title we take for inspired, be conformable to the Principles of Reason, or to the Word of God, which is attested Revelation, Reason warrants it, and we may ſafely receive it for true, and be guided by it in our Belief and Actions: If it receives no Testimony nor Evidence from either of theſe Rules, we cannot take it for a Revelation, or ſo much as for true, till we have ſome other Mark that it is a Revelation, beſides our believing that it is ſo. Thus we ſee the holy Men of God, who had Revelations from God, had ſomething elſe beſides that internal Light of Assurance in their own Minds, to teſtify to them that it was from God. They had outward Signs to convince them of the Author of thoſe Revelations. And when they were to convince others, they had a Power given them to juſtify the Truth of their  
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Commission from Heaven ; and by visible Signs to assert the divine Authority of the Message they were sent with. *Moses* saw the Bush burn without being consumed, and heard a Voice out of it. God by another Miracle of his Rod turned into a Serpent, assured him likewise of a Power to testify his Mission by the same Miracle repeated before them, to whom he was sent. This, and the like Instances to be found among the Prophets of old, are enough to shew, that they thought not an inward Seeing or Persuasion of their own Minds a sufficient Evidence without any other Proof, that it was from God, though the *Scripture* does not every where mention their demanding or having such Proofs.

I do not deny that God can, or doth sometimes enlighten Mens Minds in the apprehending of certain Truths, or excite them to good Actions by the immediate Influence and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, without any extraordinary Signs accompanying it. But in such Cases too we have Reason and the Scriptures, unerring Rules to know whether it be from God or no. Where the Truth embraced is consonant to the Revelation in the written Word of God ; or the Action conformable to the Dictates of right Reason, or Holy Writ, we run no Risque in entertaining it as such ; because tho' perhaps it be not an immediate Revelation from God, extraordinarily operating on our Minds, yet we are sure it is warranted by that Revelation which he has given us of Truth. Where Reason or Scripture is express for any Opinion or Action, we may receive it as of divine Authority : But 'tis not the Strength of our own Persuasions which



which can by itself give it that Stamp. The Bent of our own Minds may favour it as much as we please; that may shew it to be a Fondling of our own, but will by no Means prove it to be an *Offspring* of Heaven, and of divine Original.



## C H A P. XX.

*Of wrong Assent or Error.*

**K**NOWLEDGE being to be had only of visible certain Truth, *Error* is not a Part of our Knowledge, but a Mistake of our Judgment, in giving *Assent* to that which is not true.

But if *Assent* be grounded on Likelihood, if the proper Object and Motive of our *Assent* be Probability, and that Probability consists in what is laid down in the foregoing Chapters, it will be demanded, how Men come to give their *Assent* contrary to Probability. For there is nothing more common than Contrariety of Opinions; nothing more obvious, than that one Man wholly disbelieves what another only doubts of, and a third stedfastly believes, and firmly adheres to. The Reasons whereof, though they may be very various, yet, I suppose, may all be reduced to these four; First, *Want of Proofs*. Secondly, *Want of Ability to use them*. Thirdly, *Want of Will to use them*. Fourthly, *Wrong Measures of Probability*.

*First,*