

# THE DIVINITY

OF THE  
Christian Religion,

PROVED  
By the Evidence of Reason,

AND  
Divine Revelation.

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By WILLIAM BATES, D. D.

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CHAP. I.

*Religion is necessary for the honour of  
God, and happiness of Man. Among  
the variety of Religions in the world,  
'tis the highest point of Wisdom to  
consider which is pleasing to God.  
God alone is to prescribe the way of  
his Worship. He has revealed it.  
The truth of Christian Religion is  
made evident by comparing it with*  
B all

## Christian Religion

all other Religions. Gentilism convinc'd of falsity by its contradicting Natural Light in mistaking the object of Worship, and in the manner of it. The Idolatry, the impure and frivolous Rites, the cruel Sacrifices of the Heathens considered. Philosophy was ineffectual to redress those evils. Judaism consider'd. The ceremonial part of that Religion contains nothing morally good. 'Twas of impossible performance to all Nations. 'Twas enjoyn'd the Jews for special reasons. The carnal Law was to expire at the coming of the Messiah, and give place to the Christian Religion, that is all life and spirit. The falseness and absurdity of Mahometism discovered by the quality of the Author, and its nature; by the fraudulent and violent means whereby 'twas propagated; by the quality of those who received it, ignorant

## proved by Reason.

rant barbarous Nations; by the quality of the Reward it propounds, neither becoming God to bestow, nor Man to desire.

**H**AVING in some former Discourses establish'd and clear'd the Foundations of Religion, I shall proceed to raise the Superstructure. That God is the Maker of the World; that he observes our moral Actions, and will require an Account of them in the future state, and distribute eternal Recompences accordingly, has been proved by such invincible Evidence that Reason cannot resist. It follows therefore that Religion is necessary both for the honour of God, and in order to the happiness of Man. For we cannot conceive, but that the wise Creator in making all

B 2 things,

## Christian Religion

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things, design'd his own Glory, both in the manifestation of his own Perfections, and that they should be acknowledg'd and reverenc'd, loved and prais'd by intelligent Creatures. This is a natural duty, to which Mankind with an unforc'd consent agrees. For, as Honour in the general is the homage paid to conspicuous Excellencies, and specially to beneficent Vertues; so Religion, that is the highest Honour, is justly due to God, the most Sovereign Being in all Perfections, and our Sovereign Benefactor. And 'tis equally clear that the happiness of Man depends on Religion. For if God regards the Actions of Men, not to have a naked speculative knowledge of them, but with an Eye of Providence and Judgment; if He will accept and reward our servi-

ces

## proved by Reason.

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ces not as profitable to Him, but as the just expressions of our love, thankfulness, and obedience to Him, 'tis requisite our prime care should be to serve Him. In this the greatest Duty and supream Interest of Men are inviolably united: for what obligation can possibly be equal to that of pleasing our Maker and Preserver? and what is comparable to the Interest of Eternity? From hence there is a general inclination in Men to worship the Deity, impress'd from the Author of Nature; but the ways are diverse. Religion changes its shape in several Countries, and the *Rites* that are observed by some Nations as sacred, are rejected by others as impious, or vain. Now, in this variety of Religions, and every one contrary to the other, 'tis necessary to consider which is

B 3

that



Chap. 1. that special Way of serving God that is only pleasing to Him. If a Traveller be distracted between several Wayes, he will enquire which leads to his Journeys end, and not go on with uncertainty. And is it not infinitely reasonable to do that in the most important Affair, which any person will do in the most ordinary? To be indifferent in a matter so deeply concerning us, is prodigious above all wonder. For if the means we use to obtain the Favour of God, provoke his Anger, our misery is remediless. But alas! no rashness is so common, as that of Men's preferring one Religion before another.

How many false Religions are defended by whole Nations with that Zeal as if they were the most assured Persons? when the Foundations

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Chap. 1. dations of their Belief and Adherence are so weak, that did they call Reason to Counsel, they must be convinc'd of their Errors. They are led by vain respects to their Progenitors from whom their Religion is deriv'd; and what they receive at first without discerning, they never distrust; As if the first Instructions were alwayes true. They resign up their Judgments to their Princes: And if humane Authority were a sufficient motive in this case, then every Religion will be saving in the Country where 'tis establish'd by Law. Nay the Christian Religion, though shining with an extraordinary luster, which justifies it to every one that will but open his eyes to consider it, yet is as injudiciously and carelessly received, as the vainest Religion in the World, Innume-

v. 13. Bunels Ep. of the 39. Articles. f. 192.

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rable are Christians in title, without any solid conviction in their minds, or divine change in their hearts, the effects of its truth and goodness. They are Disciples of Christ, as the *Turks* are of *Mahomet*, by the sole impression of Example.

In the discussing this matter I shall proceed upon such Principles as are evident to the humane understanding. 'Tis a common Principle acknowledged by all Men, *That God alone is to prescribe that Way and Order of Service wherein He will be honoured.* For this Reason those who in any Nation introduc'd a Form of Religion, always pretended to have Divine-Direction for it. Now that God has signified his Will to Men in this most important Matter, 'tis most reasonable to believe. The

Philo-

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Arist. Metaph.

|| Philosopher observes that such is the providence of Nature, that the most necessary Arts for the support of life are easily learnt of all. In the rudest Ages men were skillful to cultivate the Earth, to govern their Flocks, to dress their Provisions for food. But those Arts that were onely for delight, not absolutely useful; as Musick, Painting, Perfuming, Embroidery, &c. required more study and skill, and therefore were more modern. And if the Divine Providence has such a tender care of Man, as to make the knowledge of such things easy, as are requisite for the Temporal life, 'tis reason to believe he has not left him destitute of those means that are necessary for the obtaining Eternal Life. Now that the Christian Religion alone is true, will fully appear,

1. By

*W. M. Mead. of  
Hazard of Early  
Obedience p. 77.*

1. By comparing it with other Religions, that upon trial are convinc'd of open falsity, or that they are infinitely excelled by the Christian in those things wherein they have any resemblance, or degrees of Truth and Goodness.

2. By considering it directly, as to its intrinsic excellencies, and those External Supernatural Operations, that are the express Characters of God's hand, which afford an infallible testimony of his approving it.

Before the coming of Christ into the World there were two sorts of Religions, Gentilisme, and Judaisme. The first is utterly excluded upon the account of its gross and palpable contrariety to the Principles of sound Reason.

1. By a fundamental error in the Object of Worship. Idolatry then

then spread through all the Regions under both the Hemispheres. Now 'tis evident by Reason there is but one true God, an Infinite Being, the Maker and Governour of all things, that has alone Divine excellencies in himself, and a Divine Empire over us, and consequently is alone worthy of Supreme Honour. And what greater indignity can be offered to Him, than the placing of Idols in His Throne? He is a jealous God, sensible and severe; and will not suffer any partner in his Worship. His Honour is eminently concern'd to vindicate His despised Deity. 'Tis a pittiful shift to alledg, that they honoured their inferiour Gods with a lower and imperfect worship: for all divine Worship is supreme, and to be given only to the supreme God.

Be-

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Besides, what more debases Man than to consecrate the flower of his esteem and affections to unworthy Objects, and many times to things wherein were no signs of Life, much less any Ray of Divinity? 'Tis evident therefore that the numerous Sects of Superstition were involv'd in the most wretched ignorance of God and themselves. And 'tis observable, that no quarrels were rais'd amongst the Heathens about the several Gods they worship'd. For the Devil, the irreconcilable Enemy to God's Glory and Man's Happiness, was pleas'd with their deadly Errours. Let them adore the Host of Heaven, or of the Earth, it was alike to him: for they all diverted the minds of Men from the sole Object of Divine Worship, the true God.

2. Gen-

*a. Col. Selection  
of the 4 Reges.  
Introduction to the  
1. part p. 3. b.*

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2. Gentilism was equally culpable in the manner of Worship. Those who made Gods to themselves, ordained their service according to their fancies. But the true God that made Man will be worshipped according to his own appointment. Now if we consider that unintelligible variety of Religions amongst the Heathens, we shall have reason to conclude, that there is no instance wherein the excess of Man's native blindness and depravation is more astonishing, than in the ways he has devised for the serving of God. This will appear by taking a short general view of the ways of Worship in practice among the most learned and polite Heathens.

The Grecians and Romans had *Tanta Gentium in rebus* more Art and Improvement than *frivolis ple-* the rest, yet how frivolous and ex- *runque Reli-* travagant *gio est. Plin.*

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|| *Magis ex  
alieno jecore  
Sapiebant,  
quam ex suo.*

travagant, nay how impious were their solemn Mysteries? The *E-leusinia sacra*, the rites of *Cybele*, the *Floralia*, &c. were mixtures of Folly and Filthiness. Their Auguries by the flight of Birds, their Presages by inspecting the || Intrals of Beasts, and the Smoak of the Incense, were so fantastick, that if one had design'd to invent things ridiculous without the least shew of Reason, it had not been possible to exceed them. They were very curious about Trifles, and careless of real Vertue: And what is more unworthy of God than to imagine that He is pleas'd with little senseless observances solemnly performed? They were afraid to soil themselves with imaginary pollutions, and insensible of the deepest defilements. Their most sacred Mysteries were a covert for Un-

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|| Uncleanneſs, and under the mask of Religion the basest Villanies were disguised. But I will not rake in those sinks of filthiness. Now what is more impious than to imagine that God is pleas'd with the most sordid Lusts, that cannot be nam'd without violating Modesty, nor thought of without defiling the Mind with their infamous Ideas? But 'tis no wonder that such pollutions were esteemed Religious Rites, for they attributed to their Gods such actions as were most unworthy a vertuous Man. The Poets were the chief Doctors in their Church. Their tales of the Rapes and Incests, and secret Amours of their reputed Deities, were the rule of their Faith. And what a pernicious influence this kind of belief had upon them, and how dishonourable it was to their Gods,

|| *Μαχλῶν  
Αφεσδότης  
ὄργια. Ἀ-  
ποσβεσον, ὡ  
ἱεροφάντα,  
τὸ πῦρ, αἰ-  
δεσθῆτι δα-  
δῖχε, τὰς  
λαμπάδας,  
εἰλέγνε σου  
τ' ἱάκχον  
τὸ φῶς.  
Clem. Alex.  
Protrept.*

Chap. 1. Gods, the wiser sort then discover'd. It was *Cicero's* just censure of *Homer*, that whereas he should have raised up Earth to Heaven, instructed Men to live according to the purity of the Gods, he forc'd down Heaven to Earth, and made the Gods to live like Men in this Region of impurity. 'Tis the highest Glory of Man to be made the Image of God in moral excellencies, and 'tis the vilest contumely to God to fashion him to be the Image of Mans vicious affections.

Add further, that Man was a sinner, and under the righteous displeasure of Heaven, all were compell'd to acknowledge by the Stings of Conscience. But what miserable work has been made from the ignorance and guilty fears of the Heathens, to render the  
Deity

Chap. 1. Deity propitious, is manifest in several instances, and especially in their cruel sacrifices of Men. This was their practise in extream dangers, to purge their Cities, and avert Divine Judgments. As if some eminent acts of Sin had the vertue of expiation. In short, the design of Religion is to procure the favour of God, and to sanctifie Man, both which are necessary in order to his Blessedness; but how in sufficient Gentilism was for these great effects is manifest. Nay, on the contrary, such a prodigious mixture of folly and wickedness makes it sadly evident, that the variety of Religions among the Heathens, were but several ways of dishonouring God, and perishing for ever. It is further to be observed, that the Philosophers of greatest reputation, admir'd as  
C Oracles

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Oracles of more than humane Wisdom, did not cure these destructive evils. They should have express'd an Heroic Magnanimity (to which they vainly pretended) in resisting the dreadful torrent of Idolatry that overflowed the World. But they basely temporiz'd with the vulgar Heathen.

*W. M. Robinson.*

*Answer to W. B. Brewster.*

*p. 148.*

*v. 4. Not of paganism.*

*of Man from Rome.*

*p. 185.*

*L. 27. Baker, on*

*the Harmony of*

*p. 341.*

'Twas their declared Principle, that a wise Man should follow the Religion of his Country, and conform in his external practice with establish'd customs, if he reserv'd his mind free for Philosophy. Thus they extinguish'd the most radiant beam of the Deity, and rob'd him of his most glorious Attribute, the Unity of his Essence. And by this we may judge how unfit they were to instruct and correct the degenerate World, and make it truly better, when they suffer'd

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suffer'd Religion, the fountain of all Vertues, to be corrupted, and the Worship of the only true God, the prime and chief part of Piety, to be given not only to inferiour objects, but to evil Spirits. Miserable Physicians! whose care was applied to redress some lesser evils that concern'd Societies, and neglected this mortal wound in the Heart. 'Tis a killing aggravation of their connivance and compliance with ignorant Idolaters, that they held the truth in unrighteousness; and when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, but chang'd the Glory of his Incorruptible Nature, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping things. This was the state of the Pagan World till the Gospel appear'd, and directed the natural religious

Chap. 1. inclination of mankind into its proper channel, to the only true God.

2. The Religion of the Jews is to be considered. This the Christians acknowledg with them, was Divine in its Authority, Doctrine, Moral part, Worship and Promises. God himself was the Author, and confirm'd it by many illustrious Miracles. 'Tis deliver'd in the most antient authentick and venerable Writings in the World. It instructs us concerning the Nature of God, his Works of Creation and Providence, and the Judgment to come. It commands the love of God, and to serve him only, and the love of our Neighbour as our selves. The ceremonial part was a full conviction of the guilt of Sin, a visible discovery of the rights of eternal Justice, and a power-

Chap. 1. powerful means to humble Men before the Infinite and offended Majesty of the Creator. It propounds temporal rewards, as the marks of Gods favour suitable to the Church then in its minority, but under that Vaile the most excellent and eternal rewards. This Religion in its Ceremonial external part was to continue till the coming of the Messiah, and then to be abolish'd. To make this evident, I shall thus proceed:

1. That the ceremonial part contain'd nothing that was morally and unchangeably good, for then it had been obligatory to all Nations, and from the beginning; whereas it was prescribed only to the *Jews*, and after a long space of time, wherein many holy Men, though ignorant of that part of the Law, yet received a Divine testi-

C 3      mony



Chap. 1. many that they pleased God.

2. 'Twas of impossible performance to all other Nations; as appears by the Precepts concerning Sacrifices that were to be offered only in *Jerusalem*, and by the Levitical Priests, and their solemn Festivals so many times in the Year. Now the Worship of God being an essential Duty of the reasonable Creature, 'tis absurd to imagine that it necessarily consists in such things that cannot be done by all Men.

3. God himself often declar'd that the Rituals of the Law were of no price with him absolutely consider'd.

4. They were enjoynd the *Jews* for peculiar reasons, principally that by those imperfect rudiments they might be prepar'd for the times of *Reformation*. God had drawn

*Iſa. 1.*  
*Pſal. 50.*

drawn in the Legal Ministration, numberless Images of the Messiah; their Temple and High-Priest, their Ark and Offerings, with all their Ceremonial Service did signally point at him. And this is an infallible evidence, that a mind superiour to *Moses's* design'd all that Work with a final respect to Christ, that the Jewish Nation having the *Idea* of him always present might not mistake him when he should appear. And that heavy yoke of Ceremonies, with the spirit of servile fear that attended it, was to excite in them earnest longings after the Messiah, the Desire of all Nations, that with unspeakable joy they might receive him at his coming.

Now that the Legal Institution should expire for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, and

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a Divine Sacrifice be offer'd up of infinite value and vertue to reconcile God, and purifie the Consciences of Men, was declared whilst the service of the Temple was perform'd with the greatest Pomp. Thus the Messiah spake by the mouth of David, *Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire, my heart hast thou open'd; Burnt-offering and Sin-offering hast thou not required; then said I, lo I come; in the volume of the Book 'tis written of me; I delight to do thy will O my God.* And the same inspired Prophet declar'd when the Levitical Priesthood was in the greatest splendour, that there was another order of Priesthood than that of Aaron, established in a more solemn manner, and of everlasting efficacy: *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

*Psal. 40.*

*Psal. 110.*

That

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*Mat. 22. 42.*

That this Prophecy respected the Messiah, even the Pharisees could not deny. For when Jesus Christ askt them whose Son Christ was to be? they answered, *Dauids.* And demanding again, why David call'd him Lord, in those words of the Psalms, *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand till I have made thine enemies thy foot-stool?* they could answer nothing. Their silence was a clear acknowledgment that the Messiah was the Person there intended. The Apostle also who wrote to the Jews, takes it for granted by the universal consent of that Nation, that that Psalm respected the Messiah, and proves it was accomplish'd in Jesus Christ. Besides, 'twas foretold by the Prophet Jeremiah, that another Covenant should be made, wherein the real benefits of the pardon of Sin,

and

*Heb. 5. 5.*

*Dr. pri. aug. Letter to the Jews. p. 91. v. Bishop Barlow. Remains. p. 588.*

Chap. 1. and true Holiness that were typified by the Legal purifications and observances, should be conferred on God's People. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the House of Israel, different from that made with their Fathers when they came out of the Land of Ægypt, I will put my Law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my People. And they shall no more teach every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more. In short, there are abundant Declarations in the Prophets, that the carnal Religion of the Jews should expire, and a Religion all Spirit and Life should succeed

Chap. 1. succeed in its place, and be diffused among all Nations. This was to be introduc'd by the Messiah. Thus Moses foretold, *The Lord thy God shall raise up a Prophet from among thy Brethren like unto me, Him ye shall hear.* 'Twas the singular prerogative of Moses above the rest of the Prophets, that he was a Lawgiver, and Mediatour of the Covenant between God and Israel, and accordingly the Messiah was to be a Lawgiver and Mediatour of a new Covenant. Now if the Mosaic Institutions were to remain after his coming, the Parallel would not hold between them in those principal respects. Besides, 'twas prophesied that the Messiah should be a King sitting on the Throne of David, and commanding the Kings of the Earth. By which 'tis evident that his Laws must

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must be of another nature than those of *Moses*, that were proper only to the Church whilst confin'd to the Jewish pale, but not for the government of the World. And whereas the Jews object, that some of their Rites were ordain'd to continue for ever. The answer is clear, That was only to distinguish them from some temporary injunctions, that were of force only while they were in the Wilderness, or when they were inhabitants of *Canaan*, but were to be practis'd in all places, till by a new signification of the Divine Will they were forbidden. And 'tis observable that in the Jewish Law the term *for ever*, when applied either to a Mans right, or to servitude, imports only a continuance to the Jubile: so that those Rituals were to continue in their vigour

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gour during that intire period, and to be determin'd after the coming of the Messiah, the great Jubile of the World. And that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah is most evident, in that his coming was exactly as he was designed, and was to be expected; that he had the power of working Miracles to authorise him to change the externals of their Worship and Service. Briefly, Judaism now is but the Carcass of a dead Religion, and the obstinate adherers to it, are become so sottishly blind, as to believe the most prodigious fables, as divine Revelations. Their *Talmud*, so reverenc'd by them, contains intolerable follies, nay Blasphemies against God. It regulates his hours in the day. It relates that he spends three in studying the Law, and three more

*v. B. Wilkins*  
*principles & duties*  
*of - p. 130.*  
*The harmony of*  
*Natural Divin.*  
*Law. p. 215.*  
*J. Gale. of*  
*in Baptism. p. 335.*  
*- 346.*

in the instructing Children that dyed in their minority, and that he employs three in taking the accounts of the World, and in the three last diverts himself with *Leviathans*, and that the night being come, (for they imagine that the Sun sets in Paradise) he ascends a Chariot drawn by the swiftest Spirits, the *Cherubims*, and visits the eighteen thousand Worlds he created. I shall not instance in any more of their extravagant tales, not to be defended by the pretence of solemn Mysteries, and by strained Allegories. This is sufficient to shew that by the Righteous Judgment of God, for their rejecting the Truth of the Gospel they are given up to believe Lies.

Since the coming of Jesus Christ, *Mahometanism* has overspread a great part of the Barba-

rous

rous World. But this carries in it such apparent and certain marks of falsity, that it can be no temptation to any person in whom there is but a spark of good. Hence whether we consider,

1. The Authour from whom it was derived: a robber, one drencht in sensuality, and therefore utterly unqualified to be the revealer of the Will of the Holy God to Men.

2. The quality of its doctrines; some are ridiculous and extravagant above the vanity of a feverish dream: some are pernicious, flattering both the lower Appetites; the concupiscible, by loosing its natural restraints from exorbitant fleshly pleasures; the irascible, by commending the violent oppression of others for the advancement of Religion.

3. The

3. The means by which it had  
 Chap. 1. its rise and was propagated: It  
 sprang from imposture; *Mahomet*  
 erected an Oracle in his own Fan-  
 cy, and pretended that the Holy  
 Ghost descended there to give his  
 inspirations. Thus he seduc'd at  
 first: but having got a strong par-  
 ty, Force succeeded Deceit. The  
 Sword cut its way through many  
 Countries. And is it strange that  
 the People so fiercely taught  
 should follow the Religion of the  
 cruel Conquerour? Thus it was  
 planted, thus it increas'd, and is still  
 maintain'd by the same causes.

4. The quality of those who  
 received it. They were Barbarous  
 Nations, and absolutely forbid to  
 make an inquiry into the matters  
 of Religion. And how easie is it  
 to make an impression on the rude  
 lump of the multitude? what  
 wonder

wonder is it that pleasant follies  
 Chap. 2. should usurp the belief of the ig-  
 norant vulgar?

5. It promises in the future life  
 a Paradise fit for Swine, most un-  
 worthy the glorious Rewarder  
 God, and the excellence of Man.  
 This is so evident, that *Avicen*, a  
 Saracen Philosopher, and *Mahu-*  
*metan* in profession, speaks with  
 abhorrence of those dreggy low  
 delights, and on the contrary as-  
 serts, that the height of happiness  
 is in the perfections of the Soul u-  
 nited to God; and thus virtually  
 condemns their Faith, as repugnant  
 to the dictates of clear Reason.

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## CHAP. II.

*The Christian Religion directly consi-*  
*dered. Previous Considerations,*  
 D *That*

## Christian Religion

That there was such a person as Jesus Christ who converted in the World, and instituted that Religion, is most credible from the uniform testimony of Christians in all Ages. 'Tis equally certain the Books containing the Doctrine of Christ, are transmitted without material alteration. The proofs of Christian Religion, though not equal in clearness to sense or science, yet are sufficient to convince unprejudiced minds of its truth. The intrinsic Excellencies of the Christian Religion considered. The Doctrines of the Gospel illustrate Natural Truths concerning God, and reveal what is further necessary for his Glory and Man's Happiness. The intire Agreement between them. The Gospel discovers the misery of Man in its causes and degrees; and the means of his recovery. It represents a full and glorious Image of  
God's

## proved by Reason.

God's Perfections in the manner of our Restoration. Therefore 'tis worthy of all acceptance. The Christian Religion sets before us a Rule pure and perspicuous, in nothing superfluous or defective. The Promises of the Gospel are worthy of God, and suitable to the wants and desires of Men. They offer the pardon of Sin upon the condition of Repentance and Faith. The supernatural Assistance of the holy Spirit: The supply of our temporal wants, and support under Afflictions. The reward of Eternal Life.

I Will now consider the Christian Religion directly in it self. It has this noble prerogative above the rest, the more one searches into it, the more its Divinity appears. Whereas other Religions may please a sudden Eye, but can-

not endure a serious tryal. Some things are to be premised.

1. I shall suppose it as a Principle above all doubt, there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, who conversed in the World, consign'd the Christian Doctrine to the Apostles, and by them 'tis conveyed to us in the New-Testament. For in asserting it we have the uniform deposition of all that profess this Religion, from its rise till the present Age, and in all parts of the World. Though in other things of different opinions, yet they agree in this, that Jesus Christ was their Founder. Now who can better know the Author of an Institution Ecclesiastical or Secular, than those who were admitted into its beginning, and those who have succeeded in that order from age to age without interruption?

Besides,

Besides, we have the consenting and constant testimony of Jews and Heathens, the obstinate opposers of the Christian Religion, that its name as well as original was derived from Christ. We may with more Reason suspect, there were never such Philosophers as *Plato* and *Aristotle*, or that the Books which from their times by universal persevering fame have been attributed to them, were made by others and put forth under false titles, than to question what is so generally receiv'd concerning the Author of the Gospel. 'Tis the perfection of folly and madness to oppose such evidence.

2. 'Tis equally certain that the Books of the New-Testament are transmitted to us in their original purity, without any material alteration. For it is incredible that

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the

p. 155.



Chap. 2. the societies of *Christians* should neglect the preserving incorrupt and intire, those Writings which they esteemed a most sacred treasure, on which they built their hopes of eternal blessedness. It cannot be suppos'd they would transmit them to their Children, whose Salvation must have been dearer to them than the World, otherwise than they received them. This were to charge them with the most supine carelesness, and unnatural cruelty. Besides, the great number of *Copies* dispers'd through all places, and translated into many Languages, and read in all Christian Assemblies, make the attempt to falsifie them in things of moment to be morally impossible. This will be more clear, if we consider that among *Christians* there have been so many persons

persons wise and good, of excellent learning and vertue, and of diverse Countries, that by their office were establish't the Depositories of those precious Writings. And is there any colorable pretence to imagine, that they should suffer any notable alteration in them, much less conspire to make a change in any Doctrines of Faith or Life therein deliver'd? To give reputation and credit to a lye, intitling it to Divine Revelation, especially in matters of Eternal consequence, is such a black crime, that none can be presumed capable of, but one that has utterly lost his Conscience. I shall not here urge, that the Immortal Providence of God is eminently interested in preserving the Scriptures in sufficient purity. It were a vile imputation upon his Wisdom and

D 4 Good.

Goodness, to believe that he would permit them to be undiscernably corrupted in points important to his own Glory, and Mans Salvation. Thus a snare would be laid without possibility of prevention, and the embracing Error instead of Truth would be innocent. But this Argument though incomparably the best, supposes that the Christian Doctrine descended from Heaven, the proofs of which are to be considered.

3. I will not insist on the proofs of all the mysterious points of the Christian Faith singly consider'd, but propound the Arguments that evince the truth of that Religion, wherein they are expressly and clearly contain'd, and from thence conclude that 'tis most reasonable to believe them. As in besieging a Town, the Assailants do not at-

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tack every particular House, but vigorously press on to possess themselves of the Citadel that commands the whole, and with that all the Houses are conquer'd: That Divine Revelation is infallible, is an acknowledg'd Principle by all Men: for natural Reason dictates that unerring Wisdom, and infinite Goodness, are essential perfections of God; so that he cannot be deceived, nor deceive those that trust in his Word.

4. The proofs of the truth of Christian Religion are of a moral nature, and though not of equal clearness with the testimonies of Sense, or a Mathematical Demonstration, yet are so pregnant and convincing, that the considering dispassionate spirit fully acquiesces in them. A Mathematical Demonstration brings so strong a Light

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that the Mind cannot suspend its assent, but is presently overcome by the naked propounding of the Object: And hence it is that in Mathematical matters, there are neither Infidels nor Hereticks. But the motives of Faith are such, that although the Object be most certain, yet the Evidence is not so clear and irresistible, as that which flows from Sense, or a Demonstration. And 'tis the excellent observation of *Grotius*, God has wisely appointed this way of perswading Men the truth of the Gospel, that Faith might be accepted as an act of Obedience from the reasonable Creature. For the Arguments to induce belief, though of sufficient certainty, yet do not so constrain the mind to give its assent, but there is prudence and choice in it. Not that the Will

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\* *De verit.  
Rel Christ.*

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can make a direct impression upon the Mind, that it should comply with its desire, and see what it does not see. It cannot make an obscure Object to be clear to its perception, no more than it can change the colour of visible things, and make what appears green to the Eye to seem red. But the mind enlightned by sufficient Reasons that the Christian Religion is from God, represents it so to the Will, and the Will, if sincere and unbiaſt by carnal affections, commands the Mind not to disguise the Truth, to make it less credible, nor to palliate with specious colours the pretences of Infidelity. And thus the belief of it results from conviction and love.

This moral evidence is as convincing as is requisite to make us steadfastly believe and obey the Gospel.

Chap. 2. Gospel. Moral Arguments produce as satisfying certainty, though not so palpable as those drawn from Sense. When there is a concurrence of Reasons proper to the nature of things, and the strongest they are capable of, by their united light they dispel all doubts and fear of the contrary. For after the Understanding has deliberately and impartially compar'd the Motives and Arguments in favour of the truth of a thing, and those that contradict it, and finds the most weighty moments of Reason in one scale for it, and in the other nothing but Air and emptiness, it concludes without hesitation or suspense that such a thing is real. And as it is impossible that a Physical demonstration concerning the existence of a thing should be deceitful, because the two parts of a contradiction,

Chap. 2. diction, as of the being and not being of a thing, cannot be true : so there is as it were an equal repugnance, that a moral Demonstration, form'd upon the best Arguments the matter will admit, should deceive the Mind. It presents the object without a cloud, so that the Understanding has an undoubted assurance of it.

To proceed; the intrinsic excellencies of the Christian Religion will appear, by considering the Doctrines, Precepts, and Promises it contains, which are the essential parts of Religion. And of them in general we may observe,

1. The Gospel illustrates and establishes all the natural Principles of truth and goodness that are common to mankind, the rule of moral actions : and reveals all supernatural things requisite for the Glory

Chap. 2. ry of God, and the supreme happiness of Man, that rectified Reason upon the discovery, must acknowledge it came from Heaven, and infallibly leads those who believe and obey it to Heaven.

2. There is such an intire agreement between all the parts of the Christian Religion for the accomplishing its great end, as affords a clear conviction 'tis no humane invention, but from God. As the Harmonious Composition, the beautiful order, and uniform preservation of the World, is a sensible demonstration that it proceeds from a most *wise powerful and good Cause*.

In particular, the Doctrine of the Gospel contains besides what may be known of God, and of Man by Natural Light, two principal points: An account of the corruption and misery of mankind

Chap. 2. kind in its first causes: And his Redemption effectually accomplish'd by the Son of God. The discovery of both is equally necessary to Man. The first makes him understand the depth of his guiltiness, that he is incomparably more wretched than he feels himself, clears the Purity and Justice of God in his dealings with Man, and prepares him by the afflicted sense of his condition for Mercy. And the knowledge of the Divine Redeemer powerful to restore him, is as necessary in order to his Duty and Happiness. For without it he would be always tormented with the mournful remembrance of his lost felicity, and harden'd in despair.

1. The Christian Religion gives a full account of the depravation and misery of humane Nature in its

its first Causes. The Heathens felt  
 Chap. 2. an insuperable permanent discord  
 in Man between the upper Faculties and the lower Appetites, but were utterly ignorant of the Cause of it. Now the Scripture reveals that Man in the original frame of his Nature was regular and holy, a piece of workmanship worthy the Perfections of his Creator, but he abus'd his liberty to break the first Command, which was given for the tryal of his Obedience. He yeelded to the inticements of a fallen Spirit, *who was a Liar*, that he might *be a Murderer*, and by his revolt from God lost his Holiness, and made a forfeiture of all the priviledges of his happy State. Thus the Fountain was tainted; and *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? By the offence of one Judgment came upon all to condemnati-*

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on. Every Man is now born a  
 slave of Sin, a tributary of Death. From hence it follows, that the most deformed Monsters in villany, the most fierce enemies of Religion serve to confirm its Truth; as well as the most eminent Saints. These shew the vertue of Redemption by the sanctity of their Lives, the other the corruption of Nature by their obstinate wickedness.

2. The Christian Religion instructs us that God sent his own Son into the World in the humane nature, that he might offer up himself an expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of Men, to restore them to his Favour. This is a Mystery above the flight of any created understanding; yet 'tis so temper'd and fram'd; there is such an uniformity of Wisdom in all its  
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Chap. 2. parts, it presents such a full and glorious Image of the Deity in all his perfections, that it causes the highest admiration, and commands belief in those who duly consider it. The whole œconomy becomes the Majesty, the Goodness, the Holiness and Justice of God. His supreme Majesty appears in his pardoning the guilty for the sufferings of another. For this is an infallible proof that he is above Law. And his inconceivable Mercy is the only principle and fountain of our Pardon. For Man was absolutely incapable to merit the Favour, or to repair the Honour of God, so injur'd by his inexcusable disobedience. Repentance cannot produce such great effects. What merit can there be in the sorrowful sense and confession of that which deserves Eternal

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Chap. 2. nal Death? Besides, an extream hatred of Sin, an ardent love of Holiness, serious Resolutions to follow it what ever it costs, (which is the best part of Repentance) was due to God before the commission of Sin, therefore cannot be satisfaction; So that pure Mercy is the cause of our forgiveness. Moreover, God to glorifie his Holiness in declaring his vehement and irreconcilable hatred to Sin, and to preserve the Rights of Justice, was pleas'd to appoint an all-sufficient Mediator, capable to offer himself an expiatory Sacrifice for Sin, and to give an infinite value to it. This was done by the Incarnation of the Son of God. The Flesh and Bloud he took of our humanity, was made Divine by union with him, and offer'd on the Cross was full payment for our offences.

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Thus Justice and Mercy triumph with equal Glory, being equally Victorious. For what is more honourable to Justice than satisfaction equal to the offence? And what can more commend Mercy than the most free and undeserved bestowing the high price requisite for it? Thus the Gospel affords to us a just and compleat *Idea* of the Divine excellencies in the Redemption of Man. The design, manner, and the effect are most worthy of God. Where might such a contrivance of Wisdom be fram'd but in the Divine mind? where could such an excess of compassion be found but in the heart of God? Thus it became God who is Love, to magnifie his Love, to advance his dearest Glory, and overcome our guilty disaffection to himself. For while

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terrible apprehensions of the Deity possess the heart 'tis frozen with a stony rigor, which the hope of Mercy only can dissolve. Thus it appears that the *Doctrine of the Gospel is worthy of all acceptation.*

2. The Christian Religion sets before us a rule of life, pure and perspicuous, in nothing superfluous or defective, but comprehending the intire duty of Man. This was necessary in order to his recovery. For in his fallen state the Law of Nature is active in some things, but dormant in others. The best Morals of the Heathens are dash'd with impure permissions. *But the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.* It forbids all Sin in all its degrees, not only the con-

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Chap. 2. summation of it in the act, but the first conception of it in the thoughts, and desires. Which argues that the Lawgiver was more than a Man, having an inspection into the heart, which is only visible to God and only accountable to him. It teaches us to worship God the supream and purest Spirit with the highest esteem, and with purity of affections. It enjoyns all relative duties to Men in a most perfect manner. What things we would have others to do unto us, supposing our selves in their circumstances, we are obliged to do to them. This one Law of Christ eminently contains all others that respect society. This is the primitive rule of commerce, and directs our carriage towards all persons with justice and equity, kindness and decency. The Gospel also

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Chap. 2. with respect to our selves gives a perfect rule to make us holy and blessed. It teaches us the contempt of the World, the valuation of Heaven, the restraint of corrupted sense, and the Angelical exercise of our affections. In short, it commands the practice of all Vertues, and that we should aspire to the most eminent degrees in them. But especially it enjoyns humility and love to God, the foundation and perfection of all vertues, of which the precepts of Philosophy take little notice. Humility, that is, a lively deep sense that nothing is properly ours but sin and misery, arises from the consideration of our absolute dependance upon God for our being, and all the benefits we enjoy in Nature or Grace. From hence gratitude springs. 'Tis most reasonable that

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our lives should be a continual expression of Obedience from a noble and free principle of love to God, and be design'd for his Honour, and that for all our advantages temporal or spiritual we *should only glory in him*. In this Philosophers were very defective: They consider'd Man with respect to himself, or to other Creatures without him, and accordingly the product of their Precepts, was a certain moral honesty, to do nothing unbecoming the reasonable Nature, nor to break the civil Peace. But they did not consider duly his relation to the Creator, in *whom he lives, moves, and has his being, from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift*. And by neglecting him, all their glittering actions were but a weak counterfeit, a dead resemblance of real virtue.

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In their most eminent publick works the praise of Men was their ultimate design; and as some appear bold from Fear, they were Vertuous from Vanity. If God be not the Principle, the Motive, and the End of what we do, there are wanting the essential Ingredients of moral Goodness. Now all these Precepts shine with their native light, and carry such evidence of their rectitude, that our obedience may come from an ingenuous filial spirit satisfied with the reasonableness of our Heavenly Fathers Commands, and not be servile, only perform'd to the absolute will of a Master. And can there be a more convincing proof of the truth of Christian Religion, of its Divine descent, than the Image of Gods Holiness so clearly impress'd upon it? Add further;

*Nullam Virtus aliam mercedem laborum periculorumque desiderat, præter hanc laudis & gloriæ: quæ quidem detracta, quid est quod in hoc tam exiguo vitæ curriculo, & tam brevi, tantis nos in laboribus exerceamus?*  
Cicer. per Arch.

Chap. 2. ther ; these Precepts are deliver'd with that plainness, and so proportion'd to the capacity of all, and yet with that sovereign Authority, that 'tis reasonable to believe that God himself speaks, and it becomes Man to hear with reverence and submission. The Gospel is without the ornaments of Art, yet its sweet facility is temper'd with that Majesty, that 'tis a sensible character that Divine Wisdom compos'd it.

3. The Promises of the Gospel are so worthy of God, and suitable to the wants and desires of Men, that 'tis perfectly reasonable to assent to their truth and goodness. This will appear by a particular consideration of them.

1. The Promise of Pardon to penitent Believers. And in this we are to consider the conditions, and the

the ground of its assurance to us. Chap. 2. The conditions are Repentance and Faith.

1. Repentance is a peculiar Command and Priviledg of the Gospel. The Law consider'd in it self did not admit of it, nor give the least hope of pardon : for it supposes Man in the integrity of Nature, and accordingly directs him how to please God and preserve his Love, but propounds no means of reconciliation after an offence. There are no seeds of Grace to temper its rigour. But the Gospel is the Declaration of Mercy to the guilty and miserable, upon such terms as God may be capable to give Pardon, and Man qualified to receive it. 'Tis not more true that God is the Judge of the World, and that all Men shall appear before his Tribunal, than that

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that Sin without Repentance shall not escape Punishment. To forgive the unreformed sinner would stain his purest Perfections, the inviolable beauty of his Holiness, the incorruptible rectitude of his Justice. Such Lenity would have a pernicious influence on the corrupt World, by encouraging Men to Sin without fear, and outrageously to break his Laws in confidence of Pardon. Therefore in the Evangelical Promise, Repentance and Remission of Sins are inseparably joyn'd. Repentance is a preparative in order to our receiving Divine Mercy, and a strong preservative against Sin for time to come. The Remembrance of those sorrows and fears, the anxieties and indignation against himself that Sin caus'd in a true Penitent, will make him jealous for the

Chap. 2.

the future of his Heart, and circumspect against all Temptations that may betray him. As one that has narrowly escaped consuming by Fire, retains the *idea* of his danger so deeply impress'd on his mind, that upon any new occasion his antient fears revive, and make him very watchful. Besides, the apprehension of Just and Eternal Vengeance, makes the Mercy of God so admirable, the sense of his tender compassion so sweet, that an humble Believer cannot forget or neglect it. The forgiveness of Sin in this way is not only an engagement, but an infallible cause of fearing to offend a God so great and good.

And Faith is a qualification as requisite for the obtaining pardon; that is, a cordial, entire receiving Jesus Christ as he is presented to us

Chap. 2. us in the Gospel: to resign our minds to his Doctrines as our Prophet, to have reliance on his Sacrifice and Mediation as our Priest; to yeild universal chearful and constant Obedience to him as our King. And how congruous is it that all who receive so unvaluable a benefit as forgiveness of Sin, should thus honour him who procures it?

And the Gospel affords the strongest assurance that God is most willing to pardon humble and contrite sinners. This is necessary for the relief and ease of true Penitents. For when the enlightn'd Conscience reflects upon the number and enormity of its Sins, the presumption in committing them, 'tis ready to be swallowed up with despair of recovering the lost favour of God. It can-

Chap. 2. cannot devise any means how to appease his incensed Majesty, and satisfy violated Justice: how a Rebel should become his Son; how one condemn'd to everlasting Punishment, should be restored to the unfading inheritance of Life. The case is most intricate and hopeless. Now the Gospel propounds means of Universal Sovereign efficacy to reconcile God to us; The most precious Blood of his Son offer'd up a Sacrifice to expiate Sin. This sprinkles all Nations, and in all Ages retains an undecaying vertue. This affords solid and everlasting comfort to all sensible returning Sinners.

2. The sending of the holy Spirit of God to renew us according to his Image, and to confirm us against temptations in this mortal life,

life, is another Promise of the Gospel, and most requisite to make us capable to serve and enjoy him.

A happy temper of Nature, the Precepts of Philosophy, vertuous Examples, the severity of humane Laws, are not powerful to regenerate a Man, and transform him into a new Creature. They may restrain the exorbitancies of carnal appetites, but cannot thoroughly change the mind and affections. Were there any vital spark within, any seed of Holiness in Mans corrupted Nature, such assistance might cherish it; but he is dead to the truly *Spiritual Life*, tho not to the merely Moral, and no less than an Omnipotent efficacy can produce a new spring of life, a divine Nature, the principle of willing Obedience to God. And after conversion, while in the state of tryal here,

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best are subject to innumerable surprises by their own frailty, and exposed to new dangers every hour by temptations that foment and heighten the reliques of Sin in them, so that without supernatural assistance they would be quite discouraged and foild by the enemies that war against the Soul. Now in the Gospel God has promised to give *the holy Spirit to those that ask it*: in the most hazardous and difficult conflicts, he assures those who ardently address themselves to him for help, *that his Grace shall be sufficient for them*.

3. The Gospel contains many gracious promises with respect to supplying the wants, and giving support and refreshment under the troubles of the present life. Temporal blessings are in the lowest rank of good things, and are

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Chap. 2. promised as they should be desir'd  
subordinately to our chief good.

*First seek the Kingdom of Heaven and the Righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added,* saith our Saviour. And to relieve us in the troubles of this mortal state, the Gospel assures us of their blessed issue at the last. The main design of *Philosophy* was to reconcile the mind to every condition; that nothing might be able to discompose its tranquillity. As some high Mountains that ascend above the middle Region, whiles Clouds charg'd with Thunder break upon the sides, and Storms encompass it below, yet the top has a pure Sun, and calm Air. Thus the Philosophers pretended to raise Man to that height of vertue, that the superiour part the mind, should be serene and undisturb'd, what ever was done to his

his lower part the body. But their Principles were insufficient on which they built their Perswasion. Some pretended that Men were abus'd by words, and that was the cause of their misery. The loss of Estate, of Relations, of Health were not real evils, but only call'd so. Sottish Wisdom! as if things by the change of names would alter their qualities. Call them by what soft titles you please, still they are injurious and afflictive to our nature, and to perswade the contrary is to deprive us of Sense. Others tell us that the evils we suffer are fatal, and to resist inevitable destiny is to no purpose. But this is to exasperate instead of allaying our sorrows. This is to turn our fears into despair, to make an afflicted condition absolutely uncomfortable. Others direct us to

Chap. 2. look abroad into the wretched World, and compound a Medicine of the miseries of others for our own griefs. But this as 'tis vicious in its Principle, so it affords no true relief. For that another suffers in the same or different manner does not lessen the evil that oppresses me. Nay if humane affections are not extinguish'd, by a sorrowful influence increases it. Others discourse of the vanity of Riches, Pleasures, Dignities, and Life it self, to make us quietly to part with them. But this discourse, though true and useful, yet cannot afford contentment unless to a Christian, whose hopes extend to a future state of blessedness. For how mean so ever these things be, yet, if we know no better, they are our felicity. Some attribute to naked Vertue a power sufficient to

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support a Man under the heaviest troubles. This they affirm'd to be the true Philosophers Stone, that purifies and exalts the basest Metals, turning them into fine Gold; that enables a person not only to be content in every state, but to enjoy torments, and be pleased with the greatest disasters that befall him. But they took so high a strain, that humane Nature could not uphold. The indifference and equality of mind they so much pretended to, was but an empty appearance. One might discover unquiet agitations under all that feigned insensibility, and true servitude under that imaginary sovereignty of their wise Man. Indeed without the stedfast belief of another Life, the reflection upon unhappy vertue inflames the wounded spirit, and kindles in the breast

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*Vincor, ne ille  
plura tribuit  
virtuti, quam  
natura pui-  
atur. Cicero.  
lib. 4. Acad.  
Quest.*



Chap. 2. *Titus Imperator febrim nactus, cum leſica tranſferretur, ſuſpexiſſe dicitur dimotis plagulis Cœlum, multumque Conqueſtus Eripſi ſibi vitam immerenti, neq; enim extare ullum ſuum factum penitendum, excepto duntaxat uno.*  
Sueton.

murmurings againſt Providence, ſo that 'tis ſo far from making the afflicted happy, that 'tis rather the ſeed of new miſery for the unequal diſtributions here. Chriſtian Religion alone affords us ſolid and everlaſting comfort. It does not diſguiſe the nature of things, but allows that preſent afflictions are not joyful but grievous. It doth not promiſe an exemption from miſery: Nay it foretels that beſides the common troubles that rain upon mankind, there are ſome proper to ſincere Chriſtians, to which they are expoſ'd upon the account of their holy Profeſſion. But it aſſures them that all things ſhall work together for the good of thoſe that love God. As in mixt bodies the Divine Power is admirable, in tempering the qualities of the fighting Elements in ſuch a manner, that  
what

Chap. 2. what in it ſelf is a deſtructive contrariety, becomes only a diverſity, to preſerve the compounded beings that reſult from them. Thus the wiſe and gracious Providence of God makes all things, even the moſt adverſe, to conſpire for the final happineſs of his faithful Servants. *Their light Afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* This makes them to poſſeſs their Souls in patience, to rejoyce in hope, and to be triumphant conquerers over the greateſt outward troubles. Who can diſpute felicity with that perſon who is upon certain grounds perſwaded that nothing ſhall ſeparate him from the love of God? Nay that the worſt evils he ſuffers promoet his ſupreme happineſs. For the afflictions that beſal a Chriſtian upon the account

Chap. 2. of Religion, render him more dear to God: and those that are the effects of his Sins, if humbly submitted to, and improved for holy ends, confirm his Faith in the Divine Mercy. The *Gospel* is that Paradise wherein the Tree of Life is, whose leaves are for the healing the Nations.

4. Christian Religion promises for the reward of Obedience a Blessedness most becoming the glorious goodness of God to bestow, and the reasonable Creature to desire; that is, the perfection and satisfaction of his most noble Faculties, in the clear vision and full enjoyment of God himself in a perfect eternal state. The Heathens wretchedly mistook in their opinions about the last end of Man. There is a secret instinct in the humane nature towards a felicity

Chap. 2. city suitable to the more excellent and divine part, but stifled under darkness and concupiscence, that is become a second nature. Reason is misled by Sense after the fickle appearances, the deceitful vanishing colours of *Good*. And this is a certain indication that Man is fallen from the degree of his Original Perfection. For if he had been never corrupted, he should enjoy with assurance true & compleat happiness: if he had been always corrupted, there would be no glimmering *Idea* of an happiness above what this present World affords, no inclination towards it. This is the spring of his misery and sin, that the spiritual eternal good is undiscerned, unregarded, whilst he seeks for happiness in numberless vanities. The Philosophers themselves were extremely

Chap. 2. ly divided, and mistaken in this main point. This was indeed the master-piece for which all their Philosophy was design'd, and their pretences to make this discovery gave them reputation. From all parts some came to *Athens*, as the universal Mart, to be furnished with felicity. From hence sprung the variety of Sects among them: by this Livery they were distinguish't. For Philosophy being the rule of life, is specified by the end to which it leads. From hence arose their sharp contentions, every Sect being concern'd to defend their *Palladium*. And as the Wasps fly about with noise, and sting those who provoke them, & make combs like Bees, but without Wax or Honey: Thus the Philosophers were full of glorious presumptions, were vehement against dissenters,

Chap. 2. senters, and had the appearances of Wisdom, but afforded no certain light to direct the Mind, no Heavenly motives to allure the Will. They were not competent nor sincere searchers after true Happiness. For, 1. The darkness wherein all Men are born, involv'd them, and without supernatural light could not be dispell'd.

2. They were ambitious of superiority: every great Spirit was desirous to raise a Sect, to act the part of a King in the Scene of Fame. Now by propounding a new Object as the blessedness of Man, they had the reputation of sovereign Masters.

3. They drew a Picture of happiness every one according to their different conceptions and desires. *Epicurus* set up the pleasure of Sense, as the chief object. And that

that Reason might be flexible to his inclinations, that his Roses might have no Prickles, to prevent any melancholly reflections after carnal enjoyments, he denied the Divine Providence, and the future state. 'Tis said by some in his favour, that he intended a calm and peaceful temper of mind, a felicity refin'd from the dregs of sensuality. For this they alledge *Epicurus* himself depreciating carnal pleasures, and extolling Vertue as the great compofer of the Soul. But in vain they wash this voluptuous Swine: For,

1. Those Sentences of a more noble and generous strain, might, as flashes of Lightning from a black Cloud, break forth of his Conscience in the midst of the darkness that cover'd it, yet Sense might be his predominant Principle.

2. He

2. He was a crafty Spirit and made use of some beautiful expressions to lessen the horror that his Doctrine, nakedly proposed, would cause in sober Persons. Sometimes he speaks with a grave air as a Philosopher, That true happiness consists in the pleasures of the mind. At other times, That there is no solid happiness but what might be tasted and enjoyed by the Senses. He was a Politician, and would not scandalise the severe, nor alienate the dissolute from him. || *Tully* observes that the secrets of his School, the pernicious lessons of sensuality were not communicated to all: But those who had intimate conversation with him, had a free indulgence for their lusts.

*Aristotle* places happiness in all the perfections of the Body and Mind,

*Dulces voluptates Epicurus interdum sic extenuat, ut Curium loquimur, inter-dum ita laudat, ut quid præterea sit bonum neget se posse suspicari. Cic. lib. 2. de fin.*

|| *Quædam arcana apud se habuisse, neque se per-mittere Omnibus,*

Mind, with the confluence of all External things as necessary Ingredients of it. But this only respects Man in the present state in the World: and were his opinion true, yet his description would cause despair of obtaining that happiness. For how could any single Person expect an entire union of all such perfections in himself, as are not to be found in all Men together?

The *Stoicks* asserted felicity to consist only in Vertue. But this is contrary to Reason & Humanity. For the union of the Physical good with the Moral is requisite to give satisfaction to the faculties of man.



*Sympos.*

|| *Plato* and his followers, in whom Natural Reason ascended as high as in any of the Gentiles, had a glimpse of the true blessedness of Man, as consisting in his likeness to God and the enjoyment of him

But

But their knowledge was shadowed with much ignorance, their hopes mixt with doubtful fears. They had rather suspicious and wandering desires, than solid apprehensions and firm expectations of it.


Briefly, no sparks struck out of humane intellectuals were sufficient to give light or heat, to direct in the clear way, and to animate against the intervening difficulties that hinder Men in the pursuit of blessedness. This was the state of the Pagan World, till *Light and Immortality were brought to light through the Gospel*. The quality of this life is therein revealed; 'tis a pure and holy felicity consisting in the perpetual exercise of the most excellent actions the intelligent Nature is capable of: That is, in the perfect Knowledge and Love and Praises

 Praises of God himself. The sub-  
 Chap. 2. ject of it is the intire Man, for this  
 end the Body shall be rais'd from  
 its dead sleep to an eternal Life.  
 The place is the highest Heavens,  
 fram'd by the Divine power for  
 the seat of his Majesty, the King-  
 dom of his Love, wherein he will  
 manifest himself to his Favourits.  
 And can there be a stronger attra-  
 ctive, a more noble inducement  
 to make us holy? Secular rewards,  
 as Riches, and Honours, and the  
 like, are extrinsecal to the nature  
 of Goodness; and to do our duty  
 with such low aims and expectati-  
 ons, is to be defective in the best  
 part of it, the love of Vertue for its  
 inherent excellence. But the Di-  
 vine reward is the perfection of  
 Holiness, the glory of the Soul;  
 and the belief and regard of it has  
 a powerful influence to make us  
 truly

truly good. The Faith in this  
 makes us victorious over all the  
 charms and all the cruelties of the  
 World. For what can possibly  
 come into competition with a hap-  
 piness infinite in its greatness and  
 duration?

I will only add, that though  
 Heaven be so rich a Jewel, that it  
 needs no foil to set off its lustre, to  
 those who are clear sighted to be-  
 hold it; yet in a merciful compas-  
 sion to Man the Gospel reveals  
 what will be the recompence of  
 wilful continued disobedience, an  
 eternal Hell, wherein the Justice  
 and Power of God are terribly  
 glorified. And what is more po-  
 werful to excite the sensual and  
 secure, who despise the blessed  
 hope, than the fear of an Immor-  
 tal Death?

Now after this short delineation  
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tion of the Christian Religion, let Reason judg whether 'tis the invention of Men. The Doctrine of it shines with so clear an evidence, the Precepts are so pure, able to inspire us with true Holiness, the Promises are so Divine, that every one who does not wilfully shut his eyes, or turn them to other things, may discern its original to be from above; that it comes from the Fountain of Wisdom, Holiness, and Goodness. What are all the productions of the Earth to this sacred Present of Heaven? If there be any shadow of Vertue in other Religions, here the reality is in the highest perfection, and separate from all vicious mixtures. Christianity enjoins universal sincerity, and purity of Heart and Life. It instructs Man to appear what he is, by an humble

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humble acknowledgment of his sinful unworthiness, and to be what he appears, by an inward love and real practice of that Religion of which he makes a publick profession. It impresses a more noble Character upon moral Vertues, by enjoying them from a principle of love to God, and directing their performance to his Glory, than Philosophy did, that commanded them only as agreeable to humane reason. What are all the most beautiful excitations of Philosophy to the high motives of the Gospel? To apply our selves to the Writings of the wisest Heathens in order to our happiness, and to neglect the Scriptures, is to be guilty of worse folly than the barbarous *Indians* at *Mexico*, who though their Woods abounded with Wax, the labour of the Bees,

|| *Pet. Mart.*  
*Hist. Ind.*

yet only made use of Brands, that afforded a little light with a great deal of smoak. Upon the most impartial inquiry, and exact search, Reason will conclude, either there is no blessed end for which Man was design'd by his Maker, or the Gospel only has reveal'd it, and the effectual means to obtain it. So that we must say with the zeal and affection of the Apostles to Jesus Christ, Lord, to whom shall we go: thou hast the words of Eternal Life.

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### CHAP. III.

*The External proofs of the truth of Christian Religion considered. Miracles are only perform'd by God. Why Christianity was confirm'd by them. The number of Christs Miracles, the manner of his performing them, and*

*and their certainty, consider'd. The Miracles done by Christ to confirm his Doctrine, are an authentick Testimony that God approved it. The pretence of Libertines, that the Hea-then Religion was confirm'd by Miracles, clearly disprov'd. The rational assurance we have that the Apostles were sincere and certain of the Miraculous things related by them of Jesus Christ. His Resurrection attested by sufficient evidence.*

**W**E are next to consider those external proofs of the truth of Christianity, the works of God himself, that seal our full assurance of it. I shall instance in two; Miracles, and the accomplishment of Prophecies.

1. A Miracle is a supernatural work that requires an extraordinary

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*Dr. Prideaux's  
Letter to the Society  
p. 113.*



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nary Divine Power to effect it. For none can derogate from the Universal Laws of Nature, prescribed from the beginning of things and time, but the Author of it. Indeed we do not exactly know the compass of that Circle wherein the spirits of darkness exercise their power. They may by the application of natural means unknown to us, produce things that may astonish, or by lying Wonders deceive Men : but a true Miracle is a work reserv'd to God, and possibly to no less than Infinite Power. Whether it be a first or second Creation, the forming a new Eye, or the giving a visive power to that that was naturally blind, it can only be done by his hand. If we respect Omipotency, there is the same facility ; if the thing done, there is the same difficulty

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culty in the performance. If the Devils had such a power, they might create a separate Kingdom, and reign there.

Now Miraculous Testimonies were given to confirm *Christianity*, that there might be a just correspondence between its Doctrines and their Proofs. The mysteries of the *Gospel* in their existence are above all natural power, and in their belief above the natural understanding. All that Nature can do or know, does not make them credible. Therefore 'twas requisite those things should be confirm'd by the Divine Power, that transcend the comprehension of humane Reason. Besides, as the Mysteries of the *Gospel* are *sublime*, so the Rewards are *future* ; and that the *Gentiles* might not pretend that the Preachers of the *Gospel* feign'd

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another World, and a Heaven and a Hell, wherein the Souls and Bodies of Men shall be glorified or tormented according to their actions in this life, supernatural Evidence of the truth of those Promises and Threatnings was necessary. In short, herein the Divine Goodness appeared, That as the true Religion is necessary to the Salvation of all Men, so 'twas discernible by such signs as may convince all. For upon the sight of those Divine Works, the simplest people were led by the outward Sense, to an inward firm Faith in Jesus Christ.

These things being premised, I will take a brief view of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour to give Faith to his Doctrine.

'Tis recorded of *Moses*, who was a type of *Christ*, that after his fa-

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familiar converse with God, as a Man with his Friend, descending from the Mount, his Face shone with such an excessive brightness, as it were by reflection from the Face of God, that coming to the Israelites to deliver to them the Divine Laws, he was fain to cover it with a vail: yet some rays of that miraculous splendor were visible through that mysterious Vail, to assure them it was *Moses* himself that directed and govern'd them according to God's Will.

Thus when the Son of God came down from the Heaven of Heavens to instruct the World, he shaded the light of the Deity with a vail of Flesh; yet he was not so absolutely concealed under his humanity, but that from time to time some beams of the Divine Nature appear'd in works so proper to God,

Chap. 3. God, that the Apostle says, *We saw his Glory as the Glory of the only begotten Son of God.* In the representation of our Saviours Miracles by the Evangelists, we may consider their number and variety, his manner of performing them, and the certainty of them.

1. Their number and variety. He went about all *Galilee* healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases, even the most incurable; the *Blind*, the *Deaf*, the *Lame*, the *Paralytic*, the *Hydropic*, the *Leprous*, the *Lunatic* were cured. He rais'd the *Dead*, and cast out *Devils*. Besides his miraculous feeding so many thousands, his commanding the enraged *Winds* and *Seas* to be still, and a great calm followed; His *Transfiguration* before his *Disciples*, when the *Beauty of Heaven* descended on his *Countenance* to be there

there more beautiful, discover'd Chap. 3. the sensible Presence of the Deity in him.

2. The manner of his performing them is very considerable. They were done in an instant, by absolute dominion over Nature. Thus when he said to the *Leper*, *I will, be thou clean*, immediately his *Leprosy* was cleansed. Thus when the faithful *Centurion* address'd himself to him, --- *only speak the word, and my Servant shall be healed.* He answered, *Be it done unto thee as thou believest; and his Servant was healed, &c.* both expressions of Command and Empire. And his words to the *Blind-Man*, *Receive thy Sight*, had the same creating efficacy with those, *Let there be Light, and there was Light.* Thus with Authority he commanded the *unclean Spirits*, even the most furious

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rious and obstinate, and they were expelled from those Mansions wherein they had revelled a long time. Thus by the mere Act of his Will he revers'd the order of Nature. When the Widows Son was carrying to the Grave, He only said, *Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise; and he that was dead sate up, and began to speak.* Now in this respect, the power of Miracles in Jesus Christ was transcendent above that that either *Moses*, or the Prophets, or the Apostles had. 'Twas derived to them by favour and commission from an extrin-sick superiour principle, the Omnipotence of God; but 'twas inherent in his Person, the natural proper Attribute of his Deity, and prov'd Him to be the Son of God, the Lord of Nature, visible in humane flesh. In all places this

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blested Vertue proceeded from Him.

3. The certainty of his performing them was so great, that no shadow of suspicion could remain about it. *Vitruvius* the Master of Architects gives advice to those who built Temples to *Æsculapius*, or any other of the Heathen Deities that were invocated by the Sick, that they should choose such places as were open to the most favourable Aspects and Influences of the Heavens, where there was a well-temper'd Soil, clear Air, pure Springs of Water, that Diseased-Persons coming from unhealthy-places might obtain Recovery; and what was the benefit of Nature might be attributed to the Divine Vertue of *Æsculapius*. Thus that Idolater counsel'd for the honour of his false Gods. But in this

*Cum enim ex Pestilenti in salubrem locum corpora agra translata fuerint, & à Fontibus, salubribus aquarum usus sub ministrantur, celerius convalescent. Ita efficitur, ut ex natura loci majores, auctasque cum dignitate Divinitas excipiat opiniones. Lib. 1. cap. 2.*

Chap. 3. this he judged aright, that the power of the Deity was believed and honoured by Men proportionably to the Cures that were received from him. How much more when done by an undoubted Miracle? Of this the People the numerous spectators were so convinc'd, that they said, *When Christ cometh, the expected Deliverer, will he do more Miracles than these which this Man has done?* The Pharisees themselves could not deny the Effects, but would not acknowledg the true Cause. Envy was more powerful in their breasts, than the clearest Evidence. Therefore to invalidate his Authority, they ascrib'd some of his wonderful works to the Prince of Devils. But this pretence was so void of all Reason, and full of impiety, that nothing but inveterate malice could

Chap. 3. could suggest it. For would the Devil destroy his own Kingdom? is he such a lover of Holiness as to authorise the most perfect Master of it by a compliance with his Will? Those proud Spirits are servile only in appearance, and when they suffer themselves to be commanded by Men, 'tis always with design to establish and increase their own Dominion. Therefore the most famous Sorcerers observe some Rites by the Devil's prescription, and in the using of them acknowledg his power. But our Saviour had a sovereign Empire over them, and ejected them not only from the Bodies, but from the Souls of Men, subduing by his holy Doctrine the power of Sin, wherein the Kingdom of Satan consists. From hence he argues, If I by the finger of God cast out Devils,

Chap. 3. vils, then is the Kingdom of God come unto you. And hence it was, that he charges them with self-condemning obstinancy. For if the Gentiles were inexcusable for not acknowledging and honouring God, so clearly manifested in the Works of Nature, The Jews were as inexcusable, for rejecting Jesus Christ, so powerfully declared to be the Son of God by supernatural Operations.

Add further, that in his lowest state when he seemd to be utterly forsaken of God, yet then his Innocency and the Divinity of his Person were miraculously testified: For at his Death, even insensible Nature as if it had been capable of Knowledg and Affection, was in the most astonishing disorder, as resenting the Passion of its Lord. The Sun was eclips'd in a  
time

Chap. 3. time and place against all possibility of Nature. For the Moon was then in opposition to it and in its Full, and in an instant past a half Circle of the Heavens to interpose between the body of the Sun and the Earth, that the Air at noon day was darkn'd as at midnight. This compell'd the Roman Centurion to acknowledg that he that suffer'd was the Son of God. And his Resurrection from the Grave was a visible Argument to confirm his Doctrine; for that God would not exert his extraordinary power to confirm a false Doctrine, in a matter of infinite moment, that so nearly concerns his own Glory, and the Salvation of Men, there is sufficient assurance from his Wisdom, Truth & Goodness. Was there ever any Prince that would permit an Usurper, in  
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*That Eclipse might be caused in some other extraordinary unknown manner.*

his own Presence to make use of his Royal Seal, to authorise by Commission his Subjects to rebel against him? And would God have suffered a Deceiver to work Miracles, and thereby obtain Divine Honour from Men, the incommunicable Right of the Deity? Nay, it had not been a bare permission, but a positive Act of God himself, it being impossible that any other should do them. Or, would God who is the prime Verity, work Miracles to give credit to a Lye, and violate the Honour of his Eternal, most perfect Veracity? Or, is it consistent with his Infinite Goodness, to make a Delusion so strong, that the most sincere would be in great danger to be overcome by it? Therefore the Apostle urges it as an uncontrollable Argument of our Saviour's  
Divine

Divine Mission; *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 you your selves also know.* These were proofs of the greatest vigour, to induce the World to believe that he came from God, to make known his Counsel for the recovery of lost undone Mankind.

'Tis said by *Libertines*, that the Heathens tell miraculous stories to confirm their Religion, that their *Hero's* descended in a right line from some Deity; and not to instance in many particulars, they boasted of *Apollonius Tyanæus* as one that vied with Christ himself in wonderful works. But this Objection is easily refuted: for if *Paganism* had a miraculous Power

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attending it, why did it not make use of it to discredit that Power that authoris'd *Christianity* in the time it made fierce War against it? If equal to it in Divine Power, and incomparably superiour in humane aids, how came it to pass that the weaker prov'd victorious, and the stronger was put to flight? 'Tis evident therefore the pretended Miracles of *Paganism*, were works of the Devil, not to be compar'd with what was done by an Almighty Hand.

If it be again objected, That the relation of the Miracles as perform'd by *Jesus Christ* is from his Disciples, who favoured his Person and Cause, and therefore may be justly suspected. I answer; The vanity of the Pretence is apparent: for if they had artificially fram'd a Narrative of extraordinary

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nary things as done by him in that time wherein they wrote, and in the view of many, how easy had it been to expose them to the just scorn and hatred of all for their notorious falshood, and infatuated Impudence? but they were never accus'd of this. Nay such was the number, clearness, and greatness of his Miracles, that the uncontrouled fame of them forc'd his Enemies in after-Ages to acknowledge their truth. The *Jews* in their *Talmud* confess he did Wonders, but give such a ridiculous Account of the Means by which they were done, as betrays the weakness of their Reason, and the strength of their Malice against him. And his Apostles, with their Successors, in preaching the Gospel, wrought Miracles so frequently in the face of many Nations,

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that those who were most obstinately averse from submitting to it, could not deny what was visible to thousands, and that Miraculous Power they always ascribed to the Name of *CHRIST*. So that there is no colour for jealousy, as if his Miracles recorded in the Gospel were not true.

But because the Resurrection of *Christ* is the great Principle upon which all Christian hopes depend, I will shew that we have all the rational assurance of it, that it is capable of. This being a matter of fact done many Ages past, is to be proved by Testimony. And first, 'tis worthy of Observation that the Providence of God is concern'd to authorize this manner of proof, that is absolutely necessary for the preserving humane Societies. 'Tis of little importance, whether

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whether the truth of things be discovered in speculative Sciences, or the appearance of it deceive the Inquirer. 'Tis no wrong to the Commonwealth, that an Astronomer mistakes in his dimensions of the magnitude of the Sun; for his error does not lessen its benign influences; still it shines and causes the Spring and Autumn. 'Tis of little importance that a Philosopher is deceiv'd in his search after the principles of mixt bodies: for, notwithstanding his mistake, Animals still live, and move, and perform all the Functions suitable to their Nature. But in Judgments that respect matters of Fact, if the Truth cannot be known by testimonys, the civil felicity cannot long subsist. For the unjust distribution of Rewards and Punishments is necessarily ruinous to the

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Being of the State. And is it credible the Divine Providence that reaches to the smallest parts of the World in such an admirable manner, should leave the conduct of humane affairs, even of the greatest moment, to a deceitful Light? And that after the most diligent search and caution has been used, the result should be only wavering Conjectures? This imagination is extreamly injurious to his Wisdom and Goodness.

In particular, if we consider the Number and the Quality of the Witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, and the Circumstances of their Testimony, we shall have so clear conviction of its truth as may induce us most firmly to believe it. I do not now speak of a Divine Faith, that supernatural Light that makes us acquiesce in things be-

cause

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cause God has reveal'd them; but of a rational humane Faith, grounded on just and powerful motives, which is preparatory for the Divine.

1. The Law admits two Witnesses as a competent number in Causes of greatest moment. Of this there were many. The approved Integrity of a *Witness* gives weight to his Testimony: as on the contrary a known Lyar forfeits his Credit so entirely, that he is not believed when he speaks true. When *Demades* the Orator address himself to the *Athenians*, I call all the Gods and Goddesses to witness the truth of what I shall say: The *Athenians* often abused by his impudent Lyes, presently interrupted him, And we call all the Gods and Goddesses to witness we will not believe you. The bare word of an Honest Man

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Man in an important matter, persuades more than the most exquisite Oaths and far-fetch'd Imprecations, by which a Lyar would give credit to his Imposture. Now we have strong proof of the Integrity of the Apostles. If an inflexible Fidelity and constant Truth were qualities so remarkable in the Community of the Primitive *Christians*, that the *Pagan* \* Judges themselves were constrained to acknowledg it, certainly they were found more eminently in those by whose Doctrine and Example they form'd themselves. And as it is impossible to possess this Virtue (so strictly united to Justice) in an excellent degree, without having all the others; so 'tis evident they were adorn'd with all moral Vertues. For their lives were above the least reproach and charge of

\* Plin. in  
Epist.

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of their implacable enemies: so that they were fain to make express Laws against their Profession, to render them guilty in Appearance. Besides, the circumstances of their Testimony make it very valuable.

1. 'Twas not built on the report of others. Mere hear-say is very deceitful, and often like a Contagion passes from Ear to Ear, and blasts the Reputation of the Innocent with easy and credulous persons. But a Testimony from sight makes impression on the belief of wise considering Men. Now we have undoubted Assurance of *Christ's* Resurrection from the clear and concurrent deposition of their Senses: *What we have heard, and what we have seen with our eyes, and what we have handled of the Word of Life*, saith the Apostle *St. John*.

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2. The uniformity of their Testimony renders it convincing. If any material contradiction be between Witnesses, 'tis an infallible mark of their Forgery. But the Apostles agreed not only in the substance, but in the particularity of the Fact. In vain *Porphyry* and *Julian* rack'd their Wits to find some contrariety in their Relations. An impartial Inquirer must acknowledge all their Objections to be mere Cavils, and effects of Malice.

3. There were no motives to corrupt them. For the humane will is naturally moved either by attraction of some Good, or aversion from some Evil. A Fiction is not maintain'd for pure love of it self, but with respect to either of those objects whether real or in appearance. The Roman Histories

ries report that *Julius Proculus* solemnly swore that he saw *Romulus* ascend to Heaven : but the motive of his Imposture is visible ; for it was to prevent a great disorder among the People. But 'tis very evident that nothing desirable in the World had the least influence upon the Apostles. Nay on the contrary, whatever was terrible to Nature, discourag'd<sup>ed</sup> them. They suffer'd all temporal evils, even Death it self, for this Testimony. And this last proof confirms all the others ; They are called Martyrs by way of excellency, who have seal'd the Truth with their Blood. Now what can be added to give us full and entire Faith in their Testimony ? In great and difficult Cases, suspected Persons are put to Torture for the discovery of Truth. The Apostles were

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were tryed by the sharpest Sufferings, yet declar'd the Resurrection of their Divine Master with unfainting perseverance. What shadow of doubt can remain after such clear evidence of their sincerity? Let sober Reason judge: whether the matter is capable of proof more strong and convincing? If it be said they were deceived with an Illusion, either being distemper'd or in a dream; both the pretences are most absurd and incredible. For the operations of the External Senses may be infallibly discern'd by their proper characters from those of the Imaginations. Indeed, if the mind be in disorder, either from some more fixed and tenacious cause, or from sleep, the influences of Reason are suspended, or only some faint rays appear, and are suddenly extinguish'd, so that

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that it can make no true judgment of things. In this state, the Imagination draws all the vigour of the Soul to it self, and the Phantasms are made so bright by the heat of the Spirits in the brain, that those painted Scenes seem to be as real as the substantial objects we see, hear, and touch. But sound Reason can reflect upon it self, and extend its view to the operations of all the other faculties, and observe the just and certain difference between *Chimeras* in the imagination, and things really existant. It comprehends distinctly and with assurance, that it is not disturb'd, and that the Internal and External Senses are dispos'd for their regular operations. It considers that the *Pageants* of Fancy moving in a dream vanish in a moment upon waking. But real effects

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fects perceiv'd by the Senses in their full exercise are more constant and durable. One may be wounded in a dream, yet feel no loss of blood or strength when he is awake. But the wounds received in a Combat are sometimes rebellious against the most potent remedies. Now to apply this to the present subject.

Is it in the least degree probable that a vain shadow in a dream should make an indelible impression on the memories of the Apostles, and their waking thoughts should not discover the deceit? Nay that it should inspire them with invincible courage to assert that Christ was truly risen? Or who can with the least colour of reason accuse the Apostles of simplicity or any disorder of mind, when such are equal, uniform and strong

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strong light shines in all their Writings? whereas the discourses of Fools or distracted Persons are unshapt Abortions of the mind, beginnings without a regular progress, or if there be any coherence 'tis short, and alwayes attended with some notable extravagance. Besides, the constant order of their Lives and Actions was a certain proof of the composedness and wisdom of their minds.

To sum up briefly what is convincing that the Apostles were sincere and certain in their Testimony. How could they be deceived when they saw him do Miracles, or by his power did the like? Did they all dream in a night, that they saw him appear after his Resurrection? what could impress on them such a strong belief of that, of which the Senses were the

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 Chap. 3. proper Judges? Or could they conspire to invent such a falsehood, and so easily to be convinc'd, with the least rational hope that the World should believe them? How was it likely, considering the variable humors of Men, but that some of themselves either by violent fears, or attractive hopes should be prevailed on to discover the Fiction, and leave their Party? What could inspire them with such a false security, to despise the greatest Dangers, and such a foolish presumption to undertake the greatest difficulties? How could they expect to induce the World to believe in and worship One ignominiously put to death? After such a convincing evidence, what can Reason, nay suspicion object with any colour to weaken their testimony? The motives of credi-  
 bility

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 Chap. 4. proved by Reason. bility are so strong that we may be as truly satisfied of the reality of the things related by the Apostles, as if we had been spectators of them our selves.

## CHAP. IV.

*The accomplishment of Prophecies concerning the Messiah, in Jesus of Nazareth, is an unanswerable proof that he was sent from God to redeem the World. The circumstances of his Birth, the actions of his Life, his Sufferings and Death clearly foretold. The irreparable destruction of the State of the Jews was foretold as the just punishment for their rejecting of the Messiah. That terrible Event is a continual Proof that Jesus Christ was what he declar'd himself to be, the Son of*  
 I 2 God.

God. *The Converting of the Gentile World to the Knowledge and Service of the true God by the Messiah was foretold in the Scriptures; and is visibly fulfill'd. The Accomplishment of this Prophecy by the most unlikely means, against the strongest Opposition, is manifestly the effect of Divine Power, and is sufficient to convince the Jewish and Heathen Infidelity of the truth of Christianity.*

**T**HE Accomplishment of Prophecies concerning the MESSIAH his coming into the World, the Work he should do, his Sufferings, and the Consequences of them, afford undeniable proof that *Jesus of Nazareth* came from God for our Salvation. Pre-science of things to come, and independent on the settled course and order

order of Natural Causes, is an incommunicable Prerogative of God. His Eye only can pierce the thick vail of futurity. He has an open unconfin'd prospect of all things that were, are, and shall be. Such perfection of Knowledge transcends Angelical Minds. 'Tis more easy for the Devil by an adventurous imitation to counterfeit Miracles, than to give a clear and distinct prediction of things to come that depend on free Agents. From hence it was that he gave responses ambiguously, to conceal his ignorance of future events, and left those who consulted his Oracles dubious and hovering in what sense to understand them. God alone could instruct the Prophets to foretel things at such a distance, especially considering some of them are supernatural, and others



Chap. 4. contingent from the wavering of second Causes. Now the several Prophecies of Jesus Christ if united together, make such an entire description of him, that they seem rather Historical Narratives of what is past, than Predictions of what was to come. According to the Prophecies, he was born of a Virgin, a branch of the almost extinguish'd Family of *David*, born in *Bethlehem*, usher'd in by a forerunner, meek, lowly, just, and a worker of Miracles. Therefore when *John* the Baptist sent some of his Disciples to enquire whether he was the *Messiah* that should come: Our Saviour gave no direct Answer in words, but referred them to his Works, that gave a full and real testimony concerning him, *Go, tell John the things which ye do hear and see; the Blind re-*

*ceive*

Chap. 4. *ceive their Sight, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them: That comparing his Miraculous Operations for the recovery of humane Bodies, with the Prophecies, there being a perfect Agreement between them, and both undoubtedly from God, They might by that clear and certain Character acknowledg him to be the Promised Messiah. 'Tis an Observation of St. Austin, That the Son of God foreseeing the perverse Interpretations that his Enemies would make use of to darken the lustre of his Miracles, accusing him as a solemn Magician that wrought by*

*Previdens Dominus Iesus impios quosdam futuros, qui miraculis ejus calumniarentur, Magicis artibus tribuendo, Prophetas ante premisit. Numquid si Magus erat, & Magicis artibus fecit, ut coheretur & mortuus, Magnus erat antequam natus? O Homo mortue & vermifcendo calumniose, Prophetas audi, Prophetas Lege. Tract. in Joan.*

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the force of Inchantment, that such a false Perswasion might not prevail, sent the Prophets before his coming into the World. From hence the Saint argues to repress those impious calumnies : If by Magical Arts he did such Wonders as to conciliate Divine Honour to him even since his Death, was he a Magician before he was born? and did he know the succession of all things in his Life before he lived, that by an impossible Miracle he predicted them to *Moses, David, Esay, Daniel* and others? Having thus argued, the Saint turns himself to those Infidels, as Christ to the *Pharisees*, looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, and said, O dead wretch, hear the Prophets.

But above all, His Death and Passion (the substance of the Gospel)

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pel) is most exquisitely drawn with the lines of his own Blood. *Daniel* foretels the time; *Zachary* as if present at the execrable contract between *Judas* and the High-Priests, tels us exactly the price of the Treason, and then as if transported to *Calvary*, he saw his Side open'd with the Spear, and notes it in these words, *they shall look on him whom they have pierced.* *David*, as if he had stood at the foot of the Cross in the hour of his Sufferings, relates the manner of them in the Person of our Crucified Redeemer; *They pierced my Hands and my Feet*: Then the disjoynting of his Parts by the Torture; *I may tell all my Bones, they look and stare upon me*: His hanging naked on the Cross, *they part my Garments among them, and cast lots upon my Vesture*: the bitter draught they offer'd him,

Dan. 9. 26.

Zech. 11. 12.

s. 9m Quads.

of the Hanging

Survey of the

Various methods

of Religion. p. 310

Psal. 22.

Chap. 4.

him, they gave me also Gall for my Meat, and in my thirst they gave me Vinegar to drink: The blasphemous derision of the Priests and People the Spectators of his Death, *All that see me, laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him:* His words spoken in the height of his distress, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The Prophet *Isaiah* represents the Ignominy and Torments of his Passion, *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting: and by the eyes of his mind saw him crucified between two Thieves; He was named with Transgressors: and as present at his most affectionate dying prayer for his enemies, Father*  
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*Isa. chap.*  
52, 53.

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*forgive them, they know not what they do; observe, that he made intercession for Transgressors.* Thus as several Painters that would draw divers Copies from the same excellent Original, are intent to view its various Aspects, some directly, some on this and the other side: so the Prophets, as if they had been the Spectators of his cruel Sufferings, copied from the life, every one that part that the Holy Spirit assigned to them. Now how was it possible, if not instructed by Omniscience, that being so distant in time and place, and so long before the Accomplishment, they should concur in such an exact description of what should befall the Messiah? Men are not Prophets by the light of Reason: as Nature is not subjected to their power to work Miracles, neither  
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is Futurity open to their view, to compose an History of things to come. The Death of Christ depended on several Causes; Men, Devils, and God himself concurr'd for divers Ends in the same Event. The two prime Conspirators against his Life, *Lucifer* and *Caiaphas*, were moved both from Reasons of State to secure their own. The Devil to maintain his cruel Empire which for so many Ages he had usurp'd in the World. For our Saviour having with Authority cast out Legions of his ministring Spirits from those who were miserably possess'd by them, he was in fear of losing his Power. Besides, he foresaw that if Christ were the Son of God, the killing of him would bring such a crimson guilt upon the *Jews*, that no less punishment than their Rejection would fol-

follow: And so God should lose his peculiar People. *Caiaphas* excited the Council to devote him as a Sacrifice to preserve their Nation from ruine: for their safety depending on their homage to the *Romans*, to prevent the jealousies that might arise by the fame of his mighty Works, and by the Peoples attendance on him, that were fed by his *Miracles*, they concluded on it as a necessary expedient, that *Christ* should dy, and all suspicions be removed with him. Thus Men and Devils were the instruments, but God appointed that great Event. The storm fell from Heaven upon Him for our Sins. 'Tis therefore expressly said, *He was delivered by the determinate Counsel and foreknowledge of God*; who over-ruled the train of disorders, the work of their cruel malice, for contrary ends than were

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were design'd by them : For the Devils were cast out of their Kingdom, the *Jews* depriv'd of their Liberty, and the Kingdom of Christ establish'd for ever. Now who could read in the Mind of God his free Decrees? even the Angels of Light that always see his face, cannot without a revelation of them. None but the Spirit that searches the deep things of God, could make the discovery? And who could foresee that the Messiah so often promised to the *Jews*, so impatiently expected, and ardently desir'd, should be so fiercely rejected by them? that his Death should be the effect as of his own love, so of their hatred? None but God to whom all the periods of time are equally present, and who is more intimate with the Counsels and Passions of Men

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Men than their own Souls are, could predict it. He communicated some rays of his Prescience to holy Men, who foretold that obscurest Contingency. From hence it follows that the clear Testimonies of the Prophets exactly fulfill'd in *Jesus Christ*, are an unanswerable demonstration that He was the expected Deliverer to restore the World.

2. The universal and irreparable Destruction of the State of the *Jews*, foretold as the just punishment of their rejecting the *Messiah*, is another illustrious proof of the Divinity of his Person and Doctrine.

To represent all the Characters of that Vengeance as they are set down by *Josephus*, an Eye-Witness and Historian of it, would lengthen this Discourse beyond the limits

*M. Edwards.*  
*Survey of the*  
*Various Methods*  
*of Religion*  
*1<sup>st</sup> 244.*  
*2<sup>d</sup> 257. 6.*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> 303. 309.*

limits intended. It is sufficient to  
 Chap. 4. observe,

1. That all the severe Scourges of God met in a direful conjunction against them. The most affrighting Prodigies were his forerunners; A flaming-Sword brandish'd in the Heavens, and Monsters born on the Earth: And War, Famine, Pestilence, and Fire were his Attendants. Those who escap't the Sword were consum'd by Famine; and those who were preserved from cruel War and Famine, were swept away by the Pestilence, or devour'd by the merciless Flames. Wherever they turn'd their eyes, Death in terrible shapes appear'd.

2. All these Judgments were inflicted at once upon them in the heaviest degrees. The Sword never made a greater destruction of  
 Men

than in *Jerusalem*: here were Rivers of Blood, there Mountains of Carcasses. In some places nothing but silence and horror amongst the dead, in others the crys and groans of the dying. Innumerable were massacred by the rage of Sedition amongst themselves. And when the mild Conquerour would have spared them, yet by an unparallel'd fierceness they would rather perish in an obstinate resistance. The Famine was so extreme, as compell'd even tender Mothers to eat the flesh of their miserable Children. The Fire consum'd the City from one end to the other, without leaving any part entire. The Temple, the Sanctuary of Religion, and Image of Heaven, where God so long had dwelt, had been serv'd and prais'd, and render'd his Oracles, was not exemp-  
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ted from the fury of the Fire.

3. Their Calamity was extreme and irreparable. The first Desolation by the *Chaldeans*, so compassionately recorded by *Jeremiah*, was not comparable in the degrees and continuance to this second by the *Romans*, of which **CHRIST** himself was the Chief Mourner, and made lamentation. Then they were transported together, and not to a very rigorous nor perpetual servitude in *Babylon*. After seventy years they recover'd their Liberty, and were restored to their Native Land. But in the last, the Captives were dispers'd among divers People; a sad Prognostick that they should never be joyned again in one Society.

The Ruines of the Nation were so great, that the pieces of it are scatter'd all over the World. Where

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ever a *Jew* is found, there is a stone of ruin'd *Jerusalem* never to be rebuilt. In short, that wretched Nation is rent into innumerable parts, and expos'd to the contempt and hatred of all. As the Body of a Traitor is quarter'd, and the parts hung up in several places of publick view, to signify the horror of his Crimes in the severity of his Punishment: God has taken away all the marks of his Alliance with them. No distinction of their Tribes remain, no observance of their legal Ceremonies, no Priests, no Altars, no Sacrifices, no Prophets nor Miracles; in short, there is no true Worship among them, no God but angry and revenging their bloody impieties. And which is most worthy of consideration, the *Romans* that conquer'd them have lost their Empire, and the

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*As. Wilkins. of  
Natural Religion.*

*P. 89.  
v. 2. v. 1. v. 2.*

*Concordance. Collection of prophecies — abridged of this Book.*

*Assemblies. Annals  
Rom. 3. v. 2.*

Nations which were subdued by their Arms, have recovered their Liberty : But the *Jews* after sixteen hundred years are still miserable. Now is not this Judgment of God upon them a dreadful proof of the extremity of their Wickedness in crucifying J E S U S C H R I S T, and that consequently he was, as he declar'd himself to be, the Son of God, and that his Office and Doctrine were from Heaven. Never before did the Wrath of God break forth in such a fierce manner against a sinful Nation. Therefore 'tis represented under the Image of the final Doom, when Justice arm'd with flames shall *devour the Ungodly*, and the whole World become a Theatre of Terrors. And never was any other Nation guilty of such an high provocation : for the Son of God descended but  
once

once among Men to be personally crucified. The singularity of the punishment is a visible instructive sign of their transcendent Crime. Immediately upon their pronouncing the capital Sentence against him on Earth, their utter Ruine was pronounc'd in Heaven. And the execution of the Sentence was deferr'd no longer, but till the Elect of that People were brought in, and by the Preaching and excellent Miracles of the Apostles, the Resurrection of Christ, and the truth of the Gospel were confirm'd, and thereby a beginning and form given to the new Christian Church. Now they have written on their foreheads in very legible characters, the Fatal Curse which their Fathers pronounc'd concerning Jesus Christ, *His Blood be on Us, and our Children*. When



*Moses* with indignation for their Idolatry, broke the Tables of the Law, God reestablish'd them, but when for a greater guilt God himself broke them, there is no possible Redintegration.

If it be said, that 'tis not necessary to attribute this Ruine of the *Jews* to the particular Vengeance of God, but only to the Instability of humane things, wherein such disastrous Revolutions sometimes happen.

I answer, That although Divine Justice was so visible in their astonishing Destruction, that \**Titus* himself refus'd a Triumphal-Crown after his compleat Victory, declaring that he was but the Instrument of God's Anger, who was the Invisible Emperor in that bloody Expedition; yet to force an acknowledgment of it from all that

\* *Philost. vit.*  
*Apol. lib. 6.*

*v. D. Woodwards.*  
*Fair Warnings to a*  
*Carle's Works. p. 88.*  
*Mr. Twopenny. p. 700.*

that are not wilfully blind, it was foretold when the *Jews* were in peace, and their killing the Messiah specified, as the Meritorious Cause wherein that terrible Effect was included: Thus our Saviour in the Parable of the Husbandmen and Vineyard, after they had put to death the Master's Son, he adds, *What shall therefore the Lord of the Vineyard do? He will come and destroy the Husbandmen, and give the Vineyard to others.* And upon his drawing near to the City of Jerusalem, he wept over it, saying, *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. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine Enemies shall cast a Trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the Ground, and shall not*

Chap. 4. leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy Visitation. This was also foretold by Moses in all the terrible Circumstances : The Lord shall bring a Nation against thee from far, from the end of the Earth, as swift as the Eagle flyeth ; a Nation whose Tongue thou shalt not understand ; a Nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young : and he shall eat the fruit of thy Cattel, and the fruit of thy Land, until thou be destroyed ; which also shall not leave thee either Corn, Wine, or Oyl, or the increase of thy Kine, or flocks of thy Sheep, until he have destroyed thee : And he shall besiege thee in all thy Gates throughout all thy Land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the Siege, and in the straitness where-with thine Enemies shall distress thee. Such was the Threatning, and the Event

Event was correspondent in all the degrees of misery. Which as it demonstrates the truth of the Prophecy, so it may instruct us how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

3. The converting of the Gentile World to the saving Knowledge of God by the Messiah was foretold in the Scriptures. The beams of this glorious Truth were gradually dispens'd to the Israelites as their weak understandings could sustain it. When the Covenant was made with Abraham God declared in exprefs terms, In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the World be blessed. That Seed was the Messiah, not the people of the Jews descended from Abraham : for they were so far from being a universal Blessing to the World, that on the

Gen. 22. v. 18.  
v. 2. *More Explanatory*  
p. 565. *of the*  
*Christian Religion.*  
Gal. 3. 16.

the contrary, they vainly presum'd that God for their sakes despis'd the rest of Mankind. And indeed before the coming of Christ they were an inclosed Garden, the peculiar People of God, and without the compass of Judea Sin reign'd absolutely and universally. Now that Promise clearly signifies, that the Favour and Blessing of God that he conferr'd upon Abraham in making known to him his Will, and promising to be his God, and of his Posterity, should one day be extended to all Nations, by calling them to his Knowledg and Service. To this agrees the Prophecie of Jacob: *The Scepter shall*  
*Gen. 49. 10. not depart from Juda, nor the Law-giver from between his feet, till Shilo come, and to him shall the gathering of the People be: that is, the Gentiles shall be converted from their Idols*  
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to the true God by the Messiah, whom the Jews acknowledg to be signified by that Title. And Moses introduces God as complaining of the Idolatry and Ingratitude of the Jews, and declaring *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities, and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a People, and I will provoke them to anger with a foolish Nation.* The external Covenant between God and his People is represented by the union of Marriage, to signifie the Duty they owe to God, the highest honour, the most ardent affections, and the benefits they receive from him. Therefore when the Jews gave Divine Adoration, the highest respects of Religion, to Idols, they provok'd God to jealousy; and he threatens he would break

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break his Alliance with them, and give his Heart and Love to those which were not a People ; And by the Law of Counter-Passion they should be provok'd to Jealousy. 'Tis very visible these expressions signify the calling of the *Gentiles*. And *David* by the same Inspiration, in many *Psalms* celebrates the Kingdom of the *Messiah*. In *Psal.* 22. he is introduc'd, speaking, *My praise shall be of thee in the great Congregation ; all the ends of the World shall remember, and turn unto the Lord ; all the kindreds of the Nations shall worship before thee.* And in the 67 *Psal.* *God be merciful to us, and bleß us, and cause his Face to shine upon us. Selah. That thy way may be known upon Earth, and thy saving health among all Nations. Let the people praise thee O God, let all the people praise thee.* The Prophet *Esay* in

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in his Revelations clearly speaks of the great design of God to bring the *Gentiles* to his service. Thus in the second Chapter 'tis prophesied ; *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the Mountain of the Lords House shall be established in the tops of the Mountains, and shall be exalted above the Hills. And many People shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the Lord, and the Sword of the Lord out of Jerusalem.*

And among all the rest none is more clear and exprefs than what is recorded in *Isa.* 49. There first the *Messiah* is represented as declaring his Commission from God to go to the People of *Israel* ; *The Lord hath called me from the womb, from*

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from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my Name, and he said unto me, Thou art my Servant, in whom I will be glorified. And after complains of the obstinacy of the ingrateful Synagogue; Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought & in vain, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with God. And immediately after 'tis added, And now saith the Lord that form'd me from the Womb to be his Servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gather'd, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, it is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou maist be my Salvation to the ends of the Earth. This Oracle is precise and full; for it speaks

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speaks of the Nations in opposition to the Tribes of Israel, and directly foretels that the Jews would neglect the instructions of the Messiah, and that upon their Infidelity God would by the Messiah give saving knowledge to all Nations. And in the same sense he speaks in the 54th Chapter: Sing, O Barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travel with Child: for more are the Children of the desolate than of the married, saith the Lord. Who is the desolate and barren, but the Gentiles without God in the World, whiles the Jews were honour'd and blest in the Mystical Marriage with him? And who are the Children of the forsaken that should be far more numerous than those of the married, but the Believers of the Christian Church, in opposition

sition to the Jewish Church? And the other succeeding Prophets concur in this prediction. *Malachy* the last, speaks of it in such express terms, as are capable to convince any that does not wilfully renounce the use of his Eyes and Understanding. After God is introduc'd rejecting the *Jews*, and their Temple Service; *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an Offering at your hands.* He adds, to signify the calling of a new Church, for *from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place Incense shall be offer'd to my Name, and a pure Offering, for my Name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Thus that great wonder was clearly foretold by the Prophets, and as a work to be performed

formed by the glorious Power of God. And accordingly it is accomplished. For who but God could have inspir'd the Apostles to undertake an Enterprize so contrary to Humane Prudence, being equally dangerous and impossible? And who else could have made it successful beyond all imagination? When the Pride of *Pharaoh* was humbled, and his Strength broken by the most despicable creatures; even the Magicians were compelled to acknowledge it to be the Finger of God: but *his Arm was revealed* when the *Spiritual Pharaoh* with all his Powers of Darkness were overcome by such weak Instruments. What furious Winds from all parts of the World conspir'd to extinguish the first springing Light of the Gospel? The *Heathen Emperours* destroyed in-  

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innumerable Persons, presuming to drown the Memory of *Christ* in the Blood of the *Christians*. But such were the Faith and Love of Believers of all conditions to their Crucified Redeemer, that with the same joy they ran to suffer the most terrible punishments, as if they had been to receive Crowns. In vain the strongest Combinations were made against the Truth. For the knowledge of the only true God, and his incarnate Son *Jesus Christ*, overcame Impiety with all its Idols, and Ignorance with all its numerous Masters. What is become of all the Heathen Deities, so honour'd, so fear'd, so obstinately defended? Where are their Altars, their Statues, their Sacrilegious Priests and Sacrifices? They are buried in the ruins of their own Temples, in the darkness of eternal

eternal oblivion. Where are all the Sects of Philosophers, the *Platonists*, the *Peripateticks*, the *Stoicks*, the *Epicureans*, and the rest that fill'd *Greece* with their Fame, and so many Volumes with their Fancies and Errour? Like a Torrent that rould down with great noise from the top of a Mountain; so for a time the Speculations of their lofty Minds poured along in a flood of swelling froathy Eloquence; but now (and for how many Ages since?) the very channel is dryed up wherein they ran, so that scarce any visible ruins remain in *Athens* it self of the Schools where they taught. The greatest among them, || *Plato*, adorn'd with the title of *Divine*, could never see his Commonwealth, fram'd by him with so much study, to be establish'd in one City. Whereas if

ἐν τοῖς γράμμασιν ἀδεις ἡ πολιτείαν, ἔτι καὶ λυσε. Chryside land. Paul 4.

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we consider the Gospel of Christ, 'tis hard to determine whether the Doctrine be more simple, or the Apostles the first Masters of it to outward appearance; Yet without Learning or humane strength, in a short space they triumphed over the Eloquence of the *Greeks*, the Power of the *Romans*, the Rage of Barbarous Nations. They abrogated Laws, chang'd Customs, and renewed the face of the World. In this the Prophetick Parable was fulfill'd, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, that is, the dispensation of the Gospel, is like to a grain of Mustard-seed; one of the smallest grains, but of that spirit and quality that it suddenly springs up and spreads abroad.

This happy and stupendous success of the Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, consider'd in it self, is an unanswerable

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rable proof that the *Christian Religion* came from Heaven. For it was only possible to the Divine Power. 'Tis no wonder the Religion of *Mahomet* extended and establish'd its Conquests in many Countries: For that Seducer perswaded the barbarous People by force of Arms, they must be his Disciples or Slaves. And can the Mind form a clear Judgment, or the Will make a free Choice, when under a tyrannous necessity of Compliance, or losing all the Comforts of Life? Can Violence and Cruelty produce a Rational Faith? That may force them to a counterfeit compliance, but cannot make Men sincerely believe; 'tis apt to breed Form without, and Atheism within. Now that a Persecuted Religion should live and flourish in the midst of flames, is as truly ad-



mirable as if a little *Stream* should pass through an Arm of the *Ocean*, retaining its Freshness and Purity in the midst of Salt and Turbid Waters. That when the Minds of Men were prepossessed with inveterate Opinions contrary to its supernatural Mysteries, and their Wills over-ruled by Carnal Affections utterly averse from its Holy Precepts, the World was captiv'd to the belief and obedience of it, is the most noble effect of Omnipotence. For other Miracles, though above the Laws of Nature, yet were on the lower order of creatures without life and sense; but this internal Miracle was wrought on the Minds and Hearts of Men. To raise the Dead, to calm a Storm, to suspend the force of Fire, to change Waters into Blood, is not so glorious a work

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as the converting Rebellious Souls to God, and making them a willing People to his holy Laws. And if we further consider the Prophecies so many Ages before concerning it, and observe the Harmony betwixt the Works and Word of God, there results a Demonstration as clear and strong as is possible. The Prediction and Accomplishment are equally divine. The success justifies the truth of the Prophecy, and the truth of the Prophecy justifies the Divinity of the *Christian Religion*. For by the Apostles and their Successors the *Heathens* were turned from Idols, to the Service of one God the Creator of the World: which was foretold by the Prophets, not only as a thing that should arrive, but to be performed by the Power of God. To ascribe then this glori-

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ous Work to humane Artifice, as if his Providence had been prevented by others, from doing that that he promised should be done by his own Power, is so directly contrary to his Wisdom and his Truth, that common Reason abhors the thoughts of it. Therefore the *Christian Religion* is Divine, having God for its Author. Thus the Truth of the Gospel is victorious over the Jewish, or the prophane Infidel.

It may be argued against the Jews, that their God foretold his *Messiah* should convert the Nations. No other but one authorised from above could do it. *Jesus Christ* has done it, therefore he is the *Messiah*. And consequently they are either blind with prejudice, or maliciously deny the known truth. To prophane Infidels it may be urged,

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urged, none but the Divine Providence could foretel so great and marvellous a change of the World, none but the Divine Power could effect it, therefore 'twas the true God that made the project and event so exactly to correspond in all things

Add further, that by comparing the Prophecies of Christ and his Kingdom with their accomplishment, the two sorts of enemies against the *Gospel*, are made useful to convince one another. The *Pagans* by the *Jews*, that these things were foretold, the *Jews* by the *Pagans*, that these things were fulfil'd.

\* St. *Austin* relates that the Heathens seeing the exact agreement between the Prophecies in the Old \* Aliquando Pagani faciunt nobis hujusmodi questionem, cum vident quæ scripta sunt sic impleri, ut negari omnino non possint. Audent, ut dicant videtis ita fieri, & tanquam prædicta sint, conscripsistis. Serm. 67. Divers.

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Testament so clear in words, and their accomplishment in the New so clear in the Effects, had nothing to reply, but that they were written after the things were done, and feigned to be Predictions of anti-ent date. As *Virgil* weaving Fables of *Æneas*, feign'd him to be in the *Elisian* Fields, and to receive from *Anchises* a Prediction of his Descendents in a long succession and order of Men and Times; which was the story of what was actually past when he wrote it. In answer to this pretence, he breaks out with wonder and joy, *O Gloria Regis nostri!* the Cause is gain'd, and the Victory of Truth could not be more glorious. For whereas the many Nations in *Europe*, *Asia*, *Africa*, subdued by the Arms of the *Romans*, were compelled to observe the Rites of their Religion:

on: The *Jews* only were permitted to enjoy their Sacred Books, and their own Worship, and were dispers'd into all Countries. And thus by the admirable Counsel of God, they give credit to the Gospel among the *Gentiles*. For if we consider the reverence they bore to the Writings of the Prophets, that with the greatest care they have preserved them as the most precious Inheritance left by their Fathers, and their mortal hatred of *Jesus Christ* and his Gospel, that willingly they would spend their Blood to deface the Memorials of it, it is an invincible Argument that the Predictions concerning the state of the *Christian Church* recorded in their Scriptures, are sincerely delivered, and of Divine Authority. This their Malice is an advantage to the Faith of the Gospel, and

*Sparsi sunt ubiq; Judæi, portantes codices, quibus Christus prædicatur. Si enim in uno loco essent terrarum, non adjuvarent testimonio prædicationis Evangelii quæ fructificat toto orbe terrarum.*

Serm. 67.

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*Ambos inde convinco. Judeum, quia id prophetatum, et impletum Ego cognovi: Paganum, quia ego hac non convici.*

*v. A Short View of Controversy, p. 9.*

and by constraint they are the great Confirmers of it. This is sufficient to reduce the *Heathens* to silence and confusion. And the *Pagan* being convinc'd by the Books of the *Jews*, the *Jew* may be convinc'd by the Testimony of the *Pagans*: for if the Records so jealously kept by that Nation were from Divine Inspiration, if they contain Antient Prophecies which the *Heathens* see verified in the Gospel and the Christian Church, why do not the *Jews* acknowledge *Jesus Christ* to be the promised Messiah? If the Vail were not taken from *Moses's* face, and laid on their hearts, they must clearly see that the *Light of the Gentiles is the Glory of Israel*. 'Tis equally unreasonable to doubt with the *Atheist* that the Messiah was ever promised, or to believe with the *Jews* he is yet to come.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

*The Testimony produc'd by St. John for the proof of Christianity, briefly consider'd. The Witneß from Heaven, the Father, Word and Spirit; The Witnesses on Earth, the Spirit, Water and Blood, conspire in declaring JESUS CHRIST to be the Son of God, and Saviour of Men. An Answer to Objections against the Doctrines of the Trinity, the Divine Incarnation, and the mean State and Sufferings of the Son of God in the World. The Conclusion. The Gospel so proved, deserves our firmest Assent and Adherence to its Doctrines. Carnal or spiritual Lusts hinder the belief of it. It sets before us the most powerful Motives to love God.*

God. We are obliged by the strongest Reasons to obey its Precepts.

**T**He Sum of all that has been said, is comprised in the Testimony that St. John produces to prove that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the World.* This I will briefly open: *There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy-Ghost, and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in Earth, The Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, and these three agree in one.* All the Divinity gave testimony of this important Truth. The Father not only by the Miracles wrought by his Power to confirm the Mission of Christ, but (which is here principally intended) by a voice from Heaven: First at his Baptism, *This is my well-beloved Son,*

*up. 167. 186.  
1. Ep. 10. 5. 7.  
v. 2. Calamp.  
Lerns. on the  
Trinity. p. 423.*

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*in whom I am well pleased.* And at his Transfiguration before some of his Disciples, a Shining Cloud, the sign of the Divine Presence, encompassed them, and a voice came forth of the Cloud, *This is my well beloved Son, hear him.* Upon this glorious Voice they were struck with such an impression of fear that they fell on their faces. And when our Saviour near his Passion prayed, *Father glorifie thy Name, a voice came from Heaven, I have glorified it, and will glorifie it.* Now can there remain any doubt after such an high attestation from the most Sovereign Authority?

The Son also, besides the perfect holiness of his life, the exquisite Wisdom of his Doctrine, the Wonders of his Works, his Resurrection from the dead, that were authentick proofs of his Celestial Person

Person and Calling, after his Ascension gloriously appear'd from Heaven in diverse Visions to the Preachers of his Gospel. To *Saul* in his Journey to *Damascus*, calling to him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the Pricks*. This is an unexceptionable testimony that he is the Son of God, being risen from the dead, and returned to Heaven from whence he thus discover'd himself. Now that this was real and no fantastick illusion is evident by the marvelous effects of it. Those who were companions in the journey were seiz'd with great terror, and himself struck blind by the overpowering splendor of the Apparition. But especially the effects of it upon his Soul are convincing, who it was that spake to him. For *Saul* was by Sect a *Pharisee*,

riser; that of all others most passionately adher'd to the Jewish Religion: by Temper hot and violent, by Profession a persecutor of the Christians. One that breathed forth Threatning and Slaughter, that excited the Fury of the High-Priests, solicited their Cruelty. In short, a fierce spirit that envied *Nero* the title of the first Persecutor of the Church. Yet this Man by this Vision and Voice from Heaven, of a furious Persecutor in an instant became a zealous Apostle, of a Wolf became a Pastor. He presently exprest his entire submission, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* There is nothing so hard to do, nothing so dreadful to suffer, but I will readily undertake for thine honour, and the propagating thy Truth. Now from whence came this Change so

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strange, so new, in a person confirm'd in the opposite party? from whence this resignation of will so entire and perfect, so unexpected and sudden? What gave him courage to contradict to their faces the High-Priests, whose instrument he was, and declare that Jesus whom they called a Deceiver, was the Son of God, and their Judge? What animated him to appear before Kings and Emperours, to testifie this dangerous Truth? What made him with unparallel'd activity, with the most ardent affections, propagate the Gospel, and after a thousand perils by Sea and Land, a thousand disgraces and injuries, at last to confirm the Faith of Christ with his Blood? It is therefore past all contradiction that he had the greatest assurance that the Son of

of God spake to him.

Another Vision of the WORD from Heaven was to St. John, when he was pleas'd to reveal to him the future state of his Church, its Combats and Victories: He then appear'd in a form expressive of his Majesty, Power, and Providence, requisite for the ordering all the great Events that should befall it: And said, *I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I live for ever, and have the Keys of Hell, and of Death*: wherein he appropriates to himself the incommunicable titles of the Deity; and then declares those two astonishing Miracles, that the *Prince of Life* that had an Eternal Principle of it in himself, was dead; and that one who had been dead, was alive. This Riddle the Gospel unfolds; The Son of God was made

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Man, and by that admirable union allied Eternity and Time, Life and Death together. As 'tis a common form of speech, that a Man dies when the Body is depriv'd of Life, though the Soul be immortal: So it was true, the Son of God died when his Body was crucified, though he was uncapable of the least diminution of his Divine life. And after three days he rose by the Divine Power to enjoy an Immortal Life; *And have the Keys of Hell, and Death.* The irresistible force of Death all Men must yield to, and from the Grave there's no redemption by finite power. But Jesus Christ has Sovereign Authority and Power to open the Grave, and raise the Dead to an happy Immortality. This glorious Appearance made St. John to fall as dead at his Feet, and could not re-  
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cover himself, till assured by the reviving words of his favour. The Spirit also appear'd from Heaven to give Testimony concerning the divine Person and Office of *Christ*: First, by descending as a Dove on him when he was baptised. This was the completion of the Prophecy; *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the Poor, to publish Deliverance to the Captives.* And in the second of the *Acts* the Spirit descended in the form of Fiery Tongues upon the Apostles, to qualifie them for preaching the Gospel to the World: And 'tis worthy of observation, that the Apostles were before this, very defective in Wisdom and Courage, so that their Divine Master, though Goodness it self, yet tax'd them for their stupidity, and in his Suffer-

M 3

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ings they all forsook him. But after the effusion of the Spirit upon them, they were endowed with that admirable Wisdom and Resolution, that nothing could gainsay and overcome. They presently spake in various Languages the things concerning *Jesus Christ*, that the World was astonish'd, and many converted by this Testimony from God, for the honour of our Saviour, and others confounded in their obstinacy. Now since this miraculous descent of the Spirit was to ratify the Promise that he made to them, *If I go away, I will send to you another Comforter*: What more clear and valuable Testimony can we have that *Jesus Christ* is the Saviour of the World? If Infidelity should reply, If we had heard these Voices, and seen those glorious Visions, we should be

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convinc'd; but what assurance have we there is no deceit in these Relations? I answer, There never was clearer Grounds of the belief of any thing done without the compass of our own senses, than of what the Apostles testify, as hath been evidently proved before. And certainly as those who saw and heard those things, were by the Divine Characters in the external Objects, and by their efficacy on their Spirits, fully perswaded they were not deceived; so we have as strong proofs that they did not deceive us in their Reports.

I shall briefly consider the other Testimonies. *And there are Three that bear witness in Earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood; and these Three agree in one.* The Spirit is to be considered in two different manners in the Testimonies attributed

1. *Epist. Ioh. c. 7.*  
s. v. 7.

2. *Barnab. 1. p. 53.*

v. p. 158.

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buted to him, either in respect of those Representations by a Dove and Fiery Tongues, or in respect of his Verrues and Influences communicated to the *Christian Church*: The first was his Testimony from Heaven; The second his Testimony on Earth. And these were his Extraordinary Gifts, so liberally dispens'd at the first preaching of the Gospel: *To one was given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge, to another Faith; that is, extraordinary confidence in the Divine Power, for the producing Miraculous Effects; to another the Gift of Healing, to another the working of Miracles, to another Prophecy, to another Discerning of Spirits, to another divers kinds of Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues.* Now because these Operations more eminently de-  
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clare the Presence and Power of the Spirit than his ordinary Graces, they are called by that name. For understanding the second Witness, the *Water*, two things are observable:

1. That in the Rituals of *Moses's*, frequent Washings, were enjoined, for the purifying of the *Jews* from Legal Pollutions contracted by them. And as those Corporal Stains were Resemblances of the vitious habits of the mind; so the cleansing by Water was typical of sanctifying Grace that purifies the heart. And for this Reason under the New Covenant to represent the sanctification of Christians by an outward sign, Baptism in Water was appointed.

2. The Apostle *John* in the Narrative of the Sufferings of Christ, tells

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tells us that a Souldier pierced his Side with a Spear, so that *Blood and Water came out*. This is not recited by S. John merely as a circumstance of the History, or as a certain proof of his Death, but the following words [*He that saw this, testifies it, and his Testimony is worthy of belief; and he knows that he says true, that you may believe*] declare it to be of singular consequence. And accordingly he says, that *our Saviour came by Water and Blood*, with respect to that which was done at his Crucifixion, which was so ordered by Divine Wisdom for high ends: that is, the Water issuing out of his Side, was a fit Emblem of that Sanctifying Grace that is given to all that have Communion with him in his Death.

3. For the Testimony of the Blood, 'tis also to be observed, that

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that by the *Mosaic Institution* daily Sacrifices were offered up, and a most solemn one, by the High-Priest in the day of Atonement, to expiate the guilt of Ceremonial Uncleanness, and to restore those who for that were excluded from external Communion with God in the Sanctuary. Now as that legal guilt arising from those outward pollutions, and the separation of those who were so polluted, from the Service of God, was a representation of the Moral Guilt and Punishment that follows the vicious habits and actions of Men; so the shedding the Blood of the Sacrifice and Offering, was typical of the true Propitiation that was to be made by the Blood of Christ. And this is peculiarly remark'd by the Apostle, that *Jesus came not only by Water, but by Water and*

*and Blood; and 'tis the Spirit that testifies of it, and the Spirit is the Truth.* By which we must understand something distinct from the former, i. e. that the flowing of his Blood signified the reconciling efficacy of his Death, by satisfying Divine Justice, and consequently the remission of Sins given to those who believe in him. Now briefly, to shew the force of their conspiring Testimony that Jesus is the Son of God and our Redeemer, These things may be considered absolutely in themselves, or as the accomplishment of the Prophecies concerning the Messiah. In the last respect they afford us a great assurance of this Truth. For all was expressly foretold. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and*  
*your*

*your Daughters shall prophesie, and your young Men shall see Visions, and your old Men shall dream Dreams: And on my Servants and Hand-Maidens I will pour out in those dayes of my Spirit, and they shall prophesie.* This promise was universally acknowledged to refer to the coming of the Messiah. For that of Water, (that is, Sanctification) not only the washing under the Law were figures of it, but 'twas also clearly prophesied of in many places, and most expressly in Ezekiel, *I will sprinkle clean Water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness will I cleanse you. A new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statutes.* And for the third Testimony, besides that the typical Blood of the Messiah ran down  
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from all the Sacrifices, it was also foretold expressely by *Esaiah* what his Sufferings should be, and the Benefits accruing from them.

Now if we compare the Oracle with the event, who can justly doubt that the Messiah is come? But if we consider the things themselves they afford an uncontroulable Testimony of Christ's Divine Mission. Compare the Primitive Church either with the Jews or the Gentiles, and see the difference between them. The Spirit that was communicated but as it were in a few drops to the Jews, after the Ascension of Christ fell in a main showr upon the Christian Church, enriching them with supernatural gifts: some favoured with Revelations of Sublime Truths, above the discovery of the human Understanding; some foretelling

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telling things to come that were beyond the discovery of the most sharp sighted Reason; some speaking diverse Languages wherein they had never been instructed; some having such an extraordinary Faith in the Divine Power and Goodness, that innumerable Miracles were done by them in the *name* of *Christ*. If we look into the state of the Gentiles, how thick and prodigious was the darkness that overspread that *Chaos* of Impiety? In the *Roman* Empire, that compriz'd the flower of Wit and Learning, what foolish and extravagant opinions of the Deity were commonly received? What Idolatries, what Impurities, what Abominations were freely practis'd? But by the preaching of the *Gospel* how clearly were the minds of Men instructed in the true Knowledg of God? And

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And what a change was made in their Lives? The World that was as a barren Desert, was suddenly chang'd into a Paradise, fruitful in all good works. Innocence, Humility, Purity, Justice, Charity, Love to God, Resignation to his Will, were eminently visible in all Nations, and all sorts of persons that were converted to the Faith of Christ. Now who caused such a marvellous and holy Revolution in the World but God? What less than a Divine Power could raise Men above Sense, and make them victorious over the Lusts of corrupt Nature, fortified by Custom, a second Nature? Is it conceivable, supposing the Doctrine of Christ were not from Heaven, that it should produce such admirable Effects? And is it conceivable that God would adorn with all his  
Graces

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Graces the Image of his own Excellency, his most precious Benefits, those who did not honour him according to his Will? Can there be found such astonishing Contrarieties joyn'd together, as the most impious Errour and Depravation of the Mind, with the greatest Purity and Rectitude of the Will and Affections? For if Jesus Christ were not the Son of God, those who worship'd him were in a mortal Delusion.

The third Testimony the Apostle produces is *the Blood*: that is, Peace with God and Conscience, the blessed Fruit of Justification by Faith in Christ. The Heathen World was in a dark State of fears, or slept securely in the shadow of Death. Some were in a Hectic Trembling, continually haunted with the Apparition of  
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their Sins, as so many Infernal Furies: Others, though guilty of most fearful crimes, were secure from stupid Atheisme: Others were quiet, from a presumption cherish'd by Opinions unworthy of God, as if he would neglect his own Glory to shew Mercy to them. Now the Gospel to conquer the fears of sensible afflicted Sinners, and to establish a lively hope in God's Mercy, propounds a Means of Universal Sovereign Efficacy to reconcile him to us: The most precious Blood of the Son of God offer'd up as a Sacrifice to expiate Sin. This sprinkles all Nations, and in all Ages to the end of the World will be of undecaying Vertue. This appeas'd all the unquiet Agitations of the Spirits of Believers, and produc'd the Peace that passes understanding,

a Joy unspeakable and glorious. This delivered them from the fear of Death, under which the World was so long in bondage. And it is worthy the observing, that no Principles of Nature ever produc'd such a generous Contempt of Death, as the Christian Religion did in the Professors of it. The *Alexanders*, *Scipio's*, and *Cæsars* had trembled at the sight of these Savage Beasts that were let loose upon the Martyrs, at the preparations of Cruelty to torment them. Whereas they regarded them with tranquillity; nay with Joy, as the matter of their Triumph. This was true Valour indeed, for the Confession of the most important Truth, and superiour to the Courage of those who were called *Fulmina Belli*, the most Renowned Souldiers. For in a Battel, by

Chap. 5. Martial Sounds, by Violent Mo-  
 tions the Spirits are fired, and Men  
 scarce feel their Wounds, and are  
 inconsiderate of their danger. But  
 the Martyrs had nothing to heigh-  
 ten their Courage, but in cool  
 blood deliberately and without  
 alteration encounter'd that terri-  
 ble Enemy. Besides, Souldiers in  
 the sharpest Conflicts have some  
 hopes of Victory, or else of a sud-  
 den and honourable Death, *Aut*  
*cita Mors, aut Victoria leta.* And  
 he that rusheth into perils with a  
 seeming bravery, when there is  
 hopes of escaping, has not reso-  
 lution to look Death in the face  
 when 'tis inevitable. There is an  
 eminent instance of this in a fa-  
 mous Captain, of late memory, the  
 Duke *Biron*: none was more bold  
 in fight; but when he was to re-  
 ceive the Sentence of Death for his

v. Wordsworth.  
 Fair warning  
 to a French Monk.  
 .p. 81.

proved by Reason.

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his Crimes, none more disorder'd  
 by fear: sometimes he was in a  
 rage against his Judges, and after  
 his passion was evaporated, fell in-  
 to the other extremity, unmanly  
 crys, complaints, and low submis-  
 sions to obtain favour. But the  
 more than Heroick Constancy of  
 the Martyrs contemned Death in  
 its nearest approaches, and most  
 fearful pomp. Christian Religion  
 has often transform'd the most  
 tender Women and Children into  
 Men, or rather into Angels, making  
 them suffer with joy, that which  
 our Nature cannot see without  
 horror. It changed as it were  
 Flesh and Blood into a Celestial  
 substance, insensible of Fire and  
 Sword, and the most cruel Vio-  
 lences.

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Now this unshaken Resolution  
 in Christians encountering the last

N 3 Enemy



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Enemy, was from the lively sense of God's favour reconciled by the most pure and precious Blood of his Son, and the hopes of everlasting happiness in his presence.

To conclude this Argument, 'tis to be observed there is no proof more proper that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the World, than the joynt testimony of *the Spirit, Water and Blood*: For whereas Sin was the only cause of our Ruine, the Office of our Saviour is to repair that Ruine, and consequently he that effectually does it, is to be acknowledged, believed, and imbraced as our Saviour. Now the worst effects of Sin are the ignorance of the Mind, the depravation of the Affections, and the terrors of Conscience from the apprehensions of Vengeance. Therefore since the Gospel of Christ has brought

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brought Celestial Light, Purity, and Peace into the World, it is an infallible proof that He is the Redeemer of it. The Sun that visits the World with its refreshing beams, has no clearer marks of the Divine Wisdom in making it, and ordering its motions, than the Spiritual Light of the Gospel that irradiates the minds of Men, before in deep darkness. The riches of the Earth in variety of Fruits is not a more convincing Argument of the Divine Goodness, than to see the Souls of Men that before were as dead earth, under the curse of Heaven, to abound in all the fruits of Righteousness. The separating the Sea from the Land, and setting bounds to its impetuous Waves, is not a greater effect of God's Power than the calming the tempests of an unquiet Conscience, and e-

stablishing Tranquillity in it. And these Blessings we entirely owe to Jesus Christ, in whose Name they are obtain'd, by whose Spirit they are conferr'd, and for whose Glory they are design'd.

Now what more is requisite to afford us satisfaction that J E S U S C H R I S T came from God, and revealed his Will in order to our happiness? Can it be reasonably expected that new Miracles should be wrought to satisfy every Sceptick that is still unsatisfied? Indeed the fountain of them is not dried up, the Power of God is not weaken'd, nor his Mercy lessened, but in extraordinary Cases, when the Gospel is first preach'd to a Nation, it may be expected that to convert them from Gentilism to the Christian Faith he will make himself known not only by

Word,

Word, but Power, in Supernatural Operations. But the vein of Miracles is not still current in the Church, there being sufficient motives of Belief for the conviction of all that are not obstinate, without the performing new. Must the Son of God present himself to all Men in a visible Glory? Or must his Divine Father give another Majestick Testimony from Heaven concerning him? If we have not such sensible Evidence, we have as sure: The accomplishment of Scripture-Prophecies is a permanent Miracle, a more certain proof to us than that Oracular Revelation. For God spake but once in that Voice, but he speaks by the Prophets to the end of Time. That was more astonishing, but less instructive to us than Prophecies, that are continually unfolded.

and

Chap. 5. and verified by Events.

Before I finish this Argument, I will briefly consider what is objected against some Doctrines of the Gospel, viz. The Trinity, the Divine Incarnation, the Mean state and Sufferings of the Son of God in the World. These Points have been opposed by the *Jews*, and other Infidels, as mere Impossibilities, directly contrary to the Reason of Mankind.

To this I answer; We must distinguish between what is incomprehensible to Humane Reason, and what is repugnant to it; between the things which Reason cannot perfectly understand how they can be, and the things which it perfectly understands that they cannot be. Natural Light may not be able to discover the being of some things, and the manner of their

*v. m. p. 158. of precious Faith. p. 352.*

*v. p. 158. of the Trinity. p. 31. c. p. 427.*

their existence, which really are. Chap. 5. But what it sees to involve a contradiction, is absolutely impossible. Now there is no Point in the whole complexion of the Christian Faith that is repugnant to Reason. The unity and supreme equality of the Three Persons in the Godhead transcends our conception, but Reason cannot prove it to be impossible. For the Essence of God is not of the same condition with created Substances; so that although in the whole compass of the Creatures there is no like instance, but one Nature is always joyn'd with one Subsistence, yet it does not follow that the Divine Nature may not subsist in Three Persons. All the difficulty that is pretended to be invincible is this; That the manner of it is incomprehensible. And 'tis necessarily

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cessarily so; for 'tis impossible that what is Infinite should be comprehended by a finite mind.

The Incarnation of the Son of God, wherein the Essence of Christianity consists, is not contrary to Reason. Indeed 'tis impossible that the Divine Nature should be substantially chang'd into the humane Nature, and God cease to be God in becoming Man, but the Union of the Deity to the humane Nature is not impossible. For what repugnance is there, either in respect of God, or the Creature? Is it impossible that the Supreme Goodness should communicate it self in the strictest degree of union to the Reasonable Creature, or is the Reasonable Creature incapable to receive the highest Favour? This is a great Mystery; but the Divine Omnipotence is not to be limited

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limited by our narrow thoughts. 'Tis most reasonable to believe that God can do, what we cannot discover how it is performed. || Seneca prudently observes that extraordinary effects in Nature are unaccountable to us, as to their immediate proper Causes, whilst we only consider the usual Principles by which it works. Nay, in the most common works of Nature how many things are so perceptible to Sense that none is so stupid as to deny them, yet imperceptible to Reason as to the manner of their production? Who understands the admirable conjunction of the Soul and Body in Man? how two Metals of so precious and so base alloy, Gold and Lead, a Spirit and Matter, the one celestial the other earthly, should so strictly combine, and notwithstanding such

*Quare quicquam nobis insolitum est? quia naturam oculis non ratione comprehendimus, nec cogitamus quid illa facere possit, sed tantum quid fecerit. Naturæ lib. 6.*

Aug. Epist. 5.  
Volus.

*Deus Deum aliquid posse, quod nos facere non possumus. In talibus rebus, tota ratio falli, est potentia facientis.*

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such diversity in their natures and properties, imbrace with such concord in their inclinations? Now if the sharpest Eye, fixt with the greatest attention, cannot discern the manner of this Natural Union when the thing is above all doubt, can there be any pretence to disbelieve Supernatural Mysteries because we are not able to comprehend how they are effected?

3. There being infallible proofs that Jesus Christ was sent from God to make known his compassionate Counsels for the Salvation of Man, the consequence is clear and necessary, that the Doctrines of his Gospel are to be receiv'd, though never so incomprehensible to the natural understanding. There is no Demonstration more sure than the Principle of Faith, God has declar'd so, therefore 'tis  
true.

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true. 'Tis injurious to his Honour to require any other proof of his Word than his Word. 'Tis incomparably more certain that God cannot deceive us, than that our Understandings are not deceived. Now what is the main subject of the Gospel? It instructs us that *the Word was God, and the Word was made Flesh*. Can there be a more plain Declaration who Jesus Christ is, that we may conceive aright of his Natures, his Virtues, his Prerogatives and Merits? It is not possible without violence to interpret the words otherwise than they plainly signifie, that a Divine Being assum'd the Humane Nature, and was God-Man. This was also declar'd by Jesus Christ. For when the *Jews*, supposing him to be a meer Man, taxt him for the violation of the Sabbath, in his doing  
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ing a miraculous Cure on that day: he replied to their exception, *My Father works hitherto, and I work*: that is, as God is not subject to the Law of the Sabbath, but uninterruptedly does the Works of his merciful Providence; so I his Son work in all times without limitation. This expression the *Jews* truly understood to import no less than an equality with God, a Son being of the same Nature with his Father, and therefore charg'd him with Blasphemy. Our Saviour allows their Interpretation, but vindicates it from Impiety by a further declaring his Cōmunion with God in his Will and Power, that he perform'd Divine Works; that he might receive the same Divine Honour as the Father had. And shall we not believe this Testimony that *Jesus Christ* gives of himself? Did

not

not the \* W O R D understand the meaning of his own Expressions? could Truth deceive? was it possible for Wisdom to speak improperly? Was Power defective and unable to declare what it would have us to understand? How unreasonable is it then to object how can this be? What pride is it to rebel against the Divine Revelation? what obstinacy to remain unsatisfied, unless we discover how terms so distant in themselves, the highest Being, *G O D*, and the lowest in the Sphere of Rational Beings, *Man*, should be so strictly united? How they should be so intimately joyn'd without confusion of Natures in one Person, that 'tis truly said, God was humbled to the form of a Servant, and Man is rais'd to the right-hand of God. Here 'tis our duty to subject our

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\* *Aut forte qui verbum est significati-  
onem verbi ignoravit?  
et qui veritas est, loqui vera nescivit?  
et qui sapientia est, in stultiloquio erravit?  
qui virtus est, in ea fuit infirmitate, ut non possit eloqui quæ vellet intelligi?*  
Hilar. lib. 8. de Trinit.

## Christian Religion

noblest faculty the Understanding to Divine Revelation. In the Doctrines of Faith as well as in the disposures of Providence, 'tis sufficient to check presumptuous Curiosity, that God is the Author.

I shall add one Consideration more: If *Jesus Christ* was not what he declar'd himself to be, the Son of God, he was a most Impious Man. For 'tis Impiety in the supreme degree, for any in the pure order of Creatures to assume Divine Honour: But the quality of his Doctrine, and sanctity of his Life, infinitely clear him from such a vile Charge. For is it conceivable that a Person guilty of the highest even Sacrilegious Pride, should be an Instructor of the most perfect Humility to the World? 'Tis the special Character of his Religion that distinguishes it from

all

## proved by Reason.

all other Institutions, that it preserves the Divine Glory entire, that it makes the profoundest impressions in the hearts of Men of their meanness and vanity, and inspires them with an humble sense of their infinit distance from God. And for the holiness of his Life, I shall produce a Testimony that can be liable to no exception; 'tis of *Porphiry* a *Platonic* Philosopher, who excelled as in Learning and Eloquence, so in Malignity, the most furious Enemies of *Christianity*; yet he was by irresistible evidence compell'd to acknowledge, *That Jesus Christ was a most pious and Excellent Person, and that after his Death he ascended into Heaven.* And is it credible that the same Person, whose Life was a glorious Example of Holiness and Righteousness, should be guilty of the most tran-

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*D<sup>r</sup>. Prideaux to  
the Society. p. 70.*

*p. 204.*

*D<sup>r</sup>. Prideaux's  
Test. to the Society.  
p. 44.*

scendent Wickedness? 'Tis not possible for an unprejudic'd mind to entertain such a suspicion.

4. That the Son of God was here below in a mean state, that he was expos'd to the most cruel and ignominious death, if we consider the great end of his condescending goodness, it will appear to be most worthy of him; and that there is no contradiction in the things themselves, but in the perverse minds of Infidels: For,

First, He was to redeem the World not in the way of Majesty, but by humble Obedience, and Sufferings. Thus it was ordered by Divine Wisdom for the honour of God's Attributes and Government. Now if he had appear'd in sensible Glory, the design of his coming had been frustrated: who would have dared to condemn him

him to the infamous death of the Cross? who would have shed his Blood, the price of our Redemption? And 'tis very observable that our Saviour made no use of his Supernatural Power, when the doing a Miracle before *Herod* would have struck him with the reverence of him as a Divine Man, and might have preserved him from Death. Nay, when the glittering Host of Heaven, all the Orders of Angels were in Arms ready upon his least Call to have come swifter than Lightning for his rescue, yet he meekly yeilded himself up a bloody Sacrifice to God, and an ignominious Spectacle to Men. For thus it became him to fulfil all Righteousness.

Secondly; Another great End of his Coming was to found a Spiritual Eternal Kingdom; He



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was constituted a new *Adam*, to regenerate Men to an holy blessed Life, that were condemned in the first *Adam* to Death and Misery. Therefore his Life was a continual exercise of Self-denial, a pattern of Innocence and Patience, of doing good and suffering evil. Thus he convinces us that nothing is valuable in God's account but Holiness. Thus by his own Example he instructs us in the divine Philosophy, to despise the good and evil things here, in order to our everlasting happiness. He ascended to Heaven by the way of sufferings, and calls us to follow him. The fruit of Blessedness is ingrafted on the thorns of Poverty and Persecution for his Namesake. The Laws of his Kingdom are inscribed on the Body of his Cross, and must be copyed in the Hearts

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Hearts of his Subjects. And for this Reason when the Apostles, (who after his Resurrection had some reliques of their carnal conceit, that the Kingdom of GOD should come with observation for its external splendor) ask'd him, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom of Israel?* to raise their Thoughts and Affections above Earthly things, he answered, *The Holy-Ghost shall come upon you, and ye shall be Witnesses of me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the utmost ends of the Earth.* Their preaching his Life and Death should be attended with the power of the Spirit, to dispense a vigorous Influence into the hearts of Men for his Imitation. And certainly his Example is of admirable use and profit. For thus he sweetens and makes honourable

nourable those Vertues, the exercise of which were very difficult and unpleasing either in respect of their quality, being contrary to fleshly lusts, or as they expose to Contempt in the opinion of the World. For who can refuse, or be ashamed to practise the most severe Self-denial, when in that he is made a Copy of so Divine an Original as the Son of God? Now considering what an influence his Afflicted state has to procure Eternal Happiness for fallen Man, and to prepare Man for it, was it unbecoming him to descend thus low? Is it unbecoming that God loves as God? that as infinite Wisdom and Power appear'd in the Creation, so Infinite Mercy appears in our Redemption? What is more Divine than infinitely to exceed all the *Ideas* we can frame of

of Perfect Love? To do greater things for his Enemies, than Men are willing to do for their dearest Friends? and where Sin abounds that Grace superabounds? Thus the Eye of Reason clear'd by Revelation, sees that the voluntary Humiliation of the Son of God for a time, is so far from diminishing, that it exalts his Majesty. This is the great Argument and Motive of the Adoration and solemn Praise that Reasonable Creatures shall forever pay unto him, wherein his derivative Glory consists.

From what has been discours'd we may see the just grounds of our firm Assent and perfect Adherence to the Doctrine of the Gospel. There are not only sufficient but abundant Motives to induce our belief, so that it is an extreme

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treme Wonder that any to whom it is revealed, should not see the Truth so illustriously visible. The only account of such Infidelity is given by the Apostle: *The God of this World hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine upon them.* The love of some Lust fleshly or spiritual, render Men averse from receiving it. The Mysteries of Godliness are not confin'd to the speculative mind, but are for moral ends, to regulate our lives. From hence it is that the cordial belief of them very much depends on the temper and disposition of the Soul. The sincere humble Enquirer has an eminent advantage in the discovery of the truth and spiritual excellencies of the Gospel, above those who are over-rul'd by corrupt

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rupt habits. For the carnal heart either wholly turns the mind from thinking on those most sacred and concerning objects, or weakens its intention that it does not seriously and duly consider them. Men will studiously apply themselves to secular Arts, and can discern the truth of abstruse Mathematical Theorems, that are not distastful to their evil affections; yet though the Principles of Christian Faith are as unquestionable as the clearest Propositions in *Geometry*, they will not ponder those things that may convince and perswade them to believe what is directly opposite to their Lusts. Besides, as corrupt humours vitiate the palate, and make what is pleasant bitter to the taste; so vicious desires darken and deprave the mind, and incline it to judge of Doctrines to be

be true or false as they are favourable or disagreeing to them. Carnal persons fortify every Objection that may render the Mysteries of Godliness unlikely and incredible, and will be partial for Sensuality. Of this we have a great instance in the first rejection of the Gospel. The *Jews* expected the *Messiah* would come with pompous Wonders, and external Magnificence; that he would deliver them from the *Roman* Yoke, and found an Universal Monarchy for them, and according to those carnal fancies they would understand the Promises concerning him. Now though J E S U S C H R I S T approved himself to be the Son of God, the true *Messiah*, by the Sanctity of his Life, the Rectitude of his Doctrine, and the Divinity of his Miracles, yet for the poverty and

and meanness of his Condition, being without any sensible shew of Greatness and Glory, they despised him as most unworthy that Divine Relation and Office. Tho in him all the Characters of the *Messiah* were conspicuous, and the Scriptures declare expressly, *that the Messiah the Prince should be cut off, but not for himself, but to make reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness*: yet they were so prepossessed with the *Ideas* of a Terrene Felicity, that they would interpret all the Scriptures by that measure, as if the *Messiah* should come into the World to repair no other ruins but of their Temporal State and Liberty: Therefore they spake of him with scornful titles; *as for this Fellow we know not from whence he is*: And, *is not this the Carpenter*? Shall the glorious

Chap. 5. glorious Prophecies of the *Messiah* be accomplish'd in him? Shall he have Dominion from Sea to Sea, and from the River to the ends of the Earth? Shall all Kings bow down before him, and all Nations serve him? There was nothing to satisfy their sight in his outward appearance and Retinue, and his Miraculous Condescension, so much below their expectations, was more powerful to harden them in unbelief, than all his supernatural Operations to induce them to believe in him. And as the *Jews* from their affection to Secular things, were enemies to the Gospel; so the *Heathen* Philosophers from Spiritual Pride: for they vainly affected the praise of Knowledge and Vertue, as the fruit of their own mind, and the product of their own will. They did not consider God as the

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Chap. 5. Fountain of Truth; and whether the Ray of his Knowledge comes directly and immediately into us, or by reflection from others, the glory of it is entirely due to him. Besides, the great *Mysteries of Godlineß* not being suitable to their first Opinions, were rejected with disdain as foolish Impossibilities. And in every Age since, even in the pale of the Church, there are some secret Infidels that esteem the Gospel a Fable, and some who peremptorily deny the fundamental Articles of Christianity. Those who are slaves to their eyes and appetites will raise Clouds to obscure that Truth that forbids their dear Lusts upon pain of Damnation. The pretended difficulty of Belief, is but a thin transparent pretence, the difficulty of Practice is the true cause of their rejecting the Gospel.

Gospel. They would not have the Precepts of it to be their duty, and therefore are unwilling to acknowledge the Doctrines of it to be true. And those who set up a Tribunal in their own Understandings to which Divine Revelation must submit, will not believe what is above their presumptuous Reason. But that the Soul exempt from passions and prejudice has no just temptation to disbelieve the Christian Doctrine, is evident; in that so many Persons in whom the concurrence of Wisdom and Virtue was equally flourishing and excellent, after the most exact discussion, embrac'd it as the Heavenly Truth. If there were falseness in its Principles, or weakness in its Proof, how could it scape their discovery? And that they were sincere in their belief is above  
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all doubt; for they willingly sacrificed all that is valuable and dear in this life for the profession of it. Now was it ever known that any person would knowingly choose an Errour so destructive? The Will seduc'd by Sense imbraces sometimes that that is condemn'd by Reason, but it never adheres to those things that are contrary both to Reason and Sense. By this it appears that Infidelity has no just plea from the insufficiency of the proofs of the Christian Religion, which have fully satisfied the wisest, the most considerate, and sincere part of Mankind. A corrupt Heart is the spring and principle of the illusions of the mind in things that concern Salvation.

2. The Gospel propounds to us the most proper and powerful motives of love to God. In the vi-

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visible World there is a Representation so conspicuous and full of his Divine Majesty, Power & Wisdom that form'd and regulates all things, that 'tis not possible but the attentive regarding of it, will make impressions of reverence and fear, will raise our esteem and admiration. But those are dead sentiments without Love. And that in the guilty Creature fearful of God's Wrath, must be first excited by the hopes of his Pardoning Mercy. Now *the Love and Kindness of God our Saviour appear'd to Man in his Redemption*, in the most eminent manner. Though in that blessed Work the Divine Perfections are reluctant in various effects, Wisdom design'd it, Power accomplish'd it, Holiness and Righteousness was gloriously declar'd in it; yet, as 'tis applied to the benefit of Man,

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'tis the sole effect of Wise, Almighty, Holy, Tender Love. Mercy soften'd God's Bowels, open'd Heaven, sent down his Son to be one with us in nature, that he might exchange his Merits and Blessedness for our guilt and misery. Miraculous Love! to make his only begotten Son our Brother, to humble him to the condition of a Servant, that we most unworthy to be his Servants should be advanc'd to be his Children: Nay, to expose him to the death of a Malefactor, equally ignominious and painful, that we Malefactors might obtain Life and Glory. If ever Love deserv'd the title of *Excess*, 'tis this; for though not without Reason, yet 'tis without all bounds and measure. 'Tis so far above our thought, that 'tis hard to have a firm belief of it. What the *Psalmist*

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*mist* speaks of the temporal Deliverance of the Church, is more justly applicable to its Spiritual Eternal Deliverance. *When the Lord turned again the Captivity of Sion, we were like to them that dream.* As if a poor man fancying in a dream that he is a King, adorn'd with the Ensigns of Royalty, and between hopes and fears should enquire of himself, Am I awake and in my right mind? Is this Scepter, this Robe, this Crown real? Or, is it all the pleasant deceit of Imagination? And how can we reflect upon the amazing Grace of God that brings Salvation, but such thoughts will arise? Is it true that God did not spare his most innocent and dear Son to absolve us guilty Rebels? Did he dye for his Father's Enemies and his own? Unparallel'd Love! only to be fully conceiv'd

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ceiv'd by an infinite Understanding. That the Divine Father should seem to love us more than his only begotten Son, in giving him up to death for us; that the Son of God should love us more than his own Life, in dying to reconcile us to his Father, were incredible, but for the Testimony of God himself. Who can resist the sweet Violence, the powerful Attractives of this Love? How can any person that has the use of Reason to consider this great Love, not be inflam'd with affection towards his Saviour? How is it possible that these wide extremes should be found united, The infinite Goodness of God, and the equal unthankfulness of Men? that they hate and offend whom they are obliged by the dearest titles to love and serve. Methinks such unna-



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tural Ingratitude should only be found in Hell; where despair of Redemption has blotted out in those lost Souls the memory of the Love and Merits of the Redeemer. But that on Earth where his most precious Blood was shed, and is applicable for the Salvation of all that will receive him by Faith and Love, that here injuries are returned for his inestimable Benefits, is the most enormous Impiety.

Paulin.

*What shall we render unto him for our Evils which he hath suffered, for his Benefits which he gives to us? All that we can endure for his sake, is not comparable to one Thorn of his bleeding Crown. Let us return Love, that is so infinitely due to him. Wo to us if we do not love him.*

Consider further, that the same most free Love that gave the Redeemer for us, has reveal'd him to

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us. For who could have imagin'd that the Son of God should descend from his Throne in Heaven, and from the Bosom of his Father, into the Womb of a Virgin-Mother, and become Man, to save us by his sufferings? Who could have any hopes that the human nature, our low and heavy earth, should ascend above the Heavens? The World by natural light knew no more of his coming to recover it from misery, than it perceived when the same Word in the Creation rais'd it from the Abyss of Nothing. This should make us most sensible of his favour. But every one will pretend to love his Saviour. Now that we may not deceive our selves with a flashy Affection, the Rule of Tryal is plain, Our love to him must correspond in its kind and quality

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with his love to us. And that was declar'd in doing and suffering what was requisit for our Salvation. The precious Tree does not heal the Sore by its fragrancy, but must be wounded to give it Sovereign Balm. Our Saviour did not only express in words his compassionate sense of our misery, that alone had been sufficient, but *loved us and washt us from our Sins in his Blood.* After his Resurrection he shewed his pierced Hands and Side to the Disciples, not only the real proofs that he was *Jesus* that suffered, but of his Love. They might see his Heart open and Hands rent for them. And such a love is due to him. That which is only productive of Leaves and Blossoms, of affectionate words of our Saviour, but unfruitful in the works of Holiness, may deceive Men

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Men by a fair appearance, but not his eye, who judges of the truth and strength *of our love to him by our keeping his Commandments.* In short, as an active Heat proceeds by an emanation from the Fire ; so a chearful Readiness and Zeal to do the Will of Christ naturally flows from Love consecrated to him. But to enforce this the more, let us further consider,

3. We are obliged by all the titles of Gratitude and Justice, of natural & Divine Reason, to walk as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

First, The dignity of the Author requires this of us. The Son of God came down from Heaven; and if the Allusion may be allowed,

--- *circum caput omne micantes  
Deposuit radios, propiusque accedere  
jussit;*

laid

Chap. 5. laid down his Glory, that he might familiarly teach us our Duty in order to our happiness: *And if the Word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received 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?*

Secondly; The perfection and plainness of this Rule. 'Tis a wise observation, "That those Laws

\* "are best for Government, that are  
Arist. Rhet. "so clear and particular that no-  
"thing is left to the will of the in-  
"feriour Judg, who is not usually  
"so capable, and pure from by-  
"respects as the Lawgiver. The Gospel is a Light wherein all Vertues shine in their bright eminence, and all Vices blush in their odious deformity. It excludes all obscurity, that the meanest understand-

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as W. Lunt. Serious Thoughts. p. 25.

ings may see the way to happiness. Chap. 5. There can be no palliations and excuses for those who will rather argue than obey. For the revelation of God's Will is so full and open in it, that 'tis direct Rebellion not to yeeld entire subjection to it: *And they who know their Masters Will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Thirdly; To commend it to our practice we have an Example of perfect obedience set before us. If Jesus Christ had represented in the World no other person but of the Word and Wisdom of his Father; as a Master to regulate and guide us by his Commands, had revealed to us the Secrets of another World, and then ascended to Heaven; the highest Reverence and Observance had been due to his Laws. But to encourage and edge our industry he

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he was pleased to exhibit in his Life a Patern of universal Obedience. He gave us Rules of such perfect Holiness, that there seemed no necessity of his practice for our instruction : And the living image of his Laws was so visible in his Actions, that his sole Example affords us a Model of entire Sanctity. There is no kind of Vertue from the lowest to the most Heroick, of which he might not say as he did to his Disciples in his last Supper, *I have given you an Example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* And what should be more powerful in the breasts of Christians than a sacred Ambition to be like the Son of God, than a dear Affection to be conform'd to their Saviour?

Fourthly ; To excite us to our Duty, the Gospel offers such a Reward to encourage Obedience,  
and

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and threateneth such prepar'd Plagues against Disobedience, that unless a Man be miraculously transform'd into a stupid Beast, he cannot but be moved by them.

Now what darkness of mind, or rather what perverseness of heart is it, if the great Interest of the one and the other Eternity, the Blessed and the Miserable, be not sufficient to work upon us ? But alas ! how many who pretend to be the Disciples of Christ, do not obey him as their Master, love him as their Redeemer, nor fear him as their Judge ? They live as if Christ had commanded them to please, not to *crucify the flesh, and the lusts thereof* : as if he had bid them set all their Affections, their Loves, Desires, Hopes, Joys in present perishing things, and not in everlasting to come ; to labour for the Riches of  
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this World, as if they were eternal Inhabitants on the Earth, and not strangers and pilgrims in the way to Heaven. These are worse Enemies of our Saviour than the *Heathens* that do not know him, or the *Jews* that deny him. For, wearing the Livery of his Servants, they

*|| Quæ cum ita sint, magna videlicet prærogativa de nomine Christianitatis blandiri possumus, quia ita agimus, ac vivimus, ut hoc ipsum quod Christianus populus esse dicimur, opprobrium Christi esse videmur.*

*\* Estimari de cultoribus suis potest ille qui colitur. Quomodo enim bonus Magister est, cujus tam malos videmus discipulos. 2 Salv. De Gubern. lib. 4.*

|| defame his most holy Profession, obscure his Glory, and blaspheme him in their lives. If Infidels that never heard the sound of the Gospel, should see their conversation, what judgment would they make of the Excellence of Christ, and the holiness of his Law? They would \*blaspheme his Goodness without defence. Unholy Christians are the most guilty Sinners in the World. And their punish-

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ment will be heightned accordingly: For they exasperate Mercy, and make the Blood of Atonement to cry for Vengeance against them. If it be extreme perverseness to disbelieve the Gospel after so clear a Revelation from God; what degree of folly and wickedness is it, for those who believe its Truth, to contradict the evidence and design of it in their lives, as if there were no doubt of its falseness?

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