

T H E  
**Christian Belief:**

Wherein is Asserted and Proved,  
That as there is Nothing in the  
G O S P E L contrary to R E A S O N, yet  
there are some D O C T R I N E S in it  
Above R E A S O N; and these being  
necessarily enjoyn'd us to Believe, are  
properly call'd,

**MYSTERIES;**

I N

Answer to a B O O K,  
I N T I T U L E D,  
*Christianity not Mysterious.*

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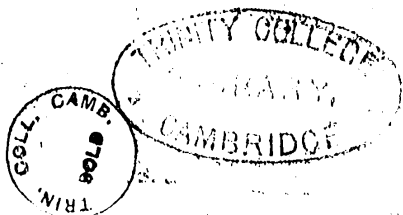
*But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery,  
even the hidden Mystery of God.*

*By M<sup>r</sup> Beconsall.*

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L O N D O N:

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Dionys. vulgo Areopag. Antw. 1634.  
Johan. Chrysoft. Par. 1621.  
Isidor. Pelysiot. Par. 1638.  
Theophilact, Lond. 1636.  
Origen Comment. Rothomag. 1668.  
Athanafius ex Officina, Commelia-  
na, 1601.*

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CERTAIN  
*Christian Doctrines,*

Properly call'd

**Mysteries;**

And to be Esteem'd Above

**REASON, &c.**

**B**EFORE I make any Formal  
Returns to the Positions ad-  
vanc'd by this *Zealous Advo-*  
*cate for R E A S O N*, I shall endea-  
vour to fix or state the several Mea-  
sures and Principles of *Human Know-*  
*ledge*; I mean, with respect to the  
*Objects* of it, as it includes the Know-  
ledge of Objects of Sense, of Corpo-  
real

## Certain Christian Doctrines,

real and Spiritual Substances, of Finite and Infinite, and of Revealed Truths.

And, first, I can freely grant (what has cost our Adversary some Pages to prove,) viz. [“That nothing in Nature can come to our Knowledge, but by some of these four Means, viz. the Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind, Humane and Divine Revelation, Sect. 1. Cap. 3. ]

But yet I think it very absurd, to advance one Rule or Standard for every Part or Branch of *Humane Knowledge*, and thereupon form Arguments, and charge *Contradictions* and *Absurdities*, without making the least allowance or distinction, *with respect to the nature of the Object, or the methods of knowing it.* Here is the Source of all our Adversary's Mistakes and Miscarriages, whereby (as will anon more fully appear) he has cast a Cloud upon *Reason*, rather than improv'd its Native Lustre and Glory.

And, *First*, as for the Knowledge of *Objects of Sense*; it's certain the Mind

## Properly call'd Mysteries.

Mind of Man, the proper Seat as well as Principle of *Humane Knowledge*, is here entertain'd by the Objects of the Material World; for, *Nothing but Matter in the ordinary course of Natural Knowledge make an Impression upon the outward Senses, so as to transmit, and fix an Idea in the Mind, suitable to the nature of the Object.* And certainly here is the great original Stock of *Humane Knowledge*; for the Senses are not only the standing Vehicles to all those Ideas, that are lodg'd in the Mind, (since even Faith and Revelation come by Hearing) but these very Ideas, if positive, and formed on Things and Substances, are little else but the Resemblances of material Sensations, or the Ideas of some *Object of Sense*. However, exalted and refined may be the Ideas of Angels and glorified Spirits, that have things presented to the view of the Mind by an immediate Intuition, it's manifest *we* that are cloath'd with Senses and Matter, and those of a very coarse allay, must have all our Ideas tinged with material Adumbrations: These are that

*Certain Christian Doctrines,*

Glaſs upon the Mind through which we ſee darkly, and that wonderfully increaſſates and diſguiſes the Images of Things. It's true, in *Objects of Senſe* our Ideas muſt be comparatively clear and exact, becauſe we are ſeated in the very heart or center of the material World, where its *Objects* perpetually crowd in upon our Senſes, and are continually preſented to our view and obſervation: But yet, in *Objects of Senſe*, which we daily ſee and converſe with, we can by no means pretend an adequate Knowledge; for, we cannot comprehend or penetrate into their proper Eſſences, or radical Subſtances; no, we can go no further than Properties, Powers, or Faculties, that diſcover themſelves in their Effects, ſtrike the Senſes, and leave an Impreſſion, whence a diſtinct Idea is form'd. Again, We cannot pretend to diſcover the true Modes of theſe Properties, Powers, or Faculties, ſo as to diſcern wherein the preciſe Nature of 'em conſiſts; for, at leaſt, we can only reſemble it by ſome Ideas that are form'd

*Properly call'd Myſteries.*

form'd by the nobleſt of Senſes, that of *Seeing*; thus of *Smells*, and *Taſts*, and the like: So that we ſee the higheſt Philoſophical Exercitations, even in matters of Senſe, are at laſt wrap'd up in that we can juſtly call a MYSTERY. Its true, *Objects of Senſe*, tho' form'd from Effects and Properties, create a very certain and indisputable Knowledge, becauſe confirm'd by daily and continued Obſervation, and becauſe the proper *Objects* of that part, which (as before concluded) is not only the Vehicle, but firſt *Elaboratory* of all Ideas; I mean the outward Senſes. And therefore, in *Objects of Senſe*, we muſt receive and embrace a Thing as it preſents itſelf to the view of our Senſes, ſince we are aſſur'd, that GOD has appointed no other way of communicating matters of this nature to Mankind. And to receive an *Object of Senſe* contrary to the Teſtimony of all our Senſes, (tho' upon the pretended Authority of *Revelation*) muſt overturn all the Meaſures and Principles of *Human Knowledge*, obliterate the No-

tices and Distinctions of *Truth* and *Error*, raze the prime Faculties and Motrements of *Reason*, and reduce Man, the Glory of the Creation, and GOD's Image and Representative, infinitely below the level of *Brutes* that perish. *For this reason we may reject the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, notwithstanding the highest Pretences to Miracle or Mystery, since it implies a Contradiction of the Testimony of all our Senses in matters of Sense.*

But, *Secondly*, let us consider *Humane Knowledge* as engag'd about the Objects of the Spiritual World, or Spiritual or Immaterial Beings; for this must very much alter the Scene of *Knowledges*, and fix it upon new Measures and Principles.

And, *1<sup>st</sup>*, It's indisputably evident, that our Knowledge of Spirits is of a mix'd nature, since it takes its rise partly from the Powers of *Natural Reason*, and partly from *Revelation*. The Knowledge of God and our own Souls, may in some measure be traced from the Powers of *Natural Reason*. The

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Frame of our own Beings, as well as that of the Universe, will instruct us, That there must be an Eternal, All-wise, and All-powerful Mover, agreeable to the Sacred Language: The invisible things of Him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead, *Rom. i. 20.* but as for the Existence of other Beings, we call Spirits, or their Orders and Societies, we must wholly receive it from *Revelation*. Again; As for the Nature and Ideas of a Spirit, this must certainly rest on the Instructions of *Reason* and *Revelation*; and after the best that can be given, God knows, our Attainments are very lame and imperfect; the excellency of our own Faculties and Operations tell us, That we are acted by a Principle within, that must be highly distinct from Matter, or least, that we see and handle much more from that Great GOD, whose Workmanship is this very *Reason* that thus dictates. This very Argument suffi-

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ciently instructs us, We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man's Device, *Acts* xvii. 29.

But now, tho' from good Arguments we may conclude, That a *Spirit* is a Being somewhat distinct from *Matter*, yet *our most exalted Idea will be but a meer Negative, or if Positive, a Resemblance of a refined Aerial kind of Matter*; so that our Ideas of a *Spirit* is much more abstruse, imperfect, and conjectural than that of a *Body*, notwithstanding the utmost assistances of *Revelation*.

And here I'm oblig'd to make some Returns to what this *Infallible Reasoner*, with the Authority of a Great Man on his side (as he calls him), has deliver'd on the Subject; it amounts to this: We have as clear an Idea of *Spirits* as *Bodies*, since both are only to be known by their Properties, and the Properties of a *Spirit* are as clear as those of a *Body*. See *Sect. 3. Cap. 2. N. 16, 17, 19*. But, with Submissi-

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on to the Infallible Chair, though some Properties which belong to those Beings we call *Spirits*, are clearly known and agreed upon, yet they are not so many, nor yet so distinguishing as those of *Bodies*; for, besides the Properties of particular *Bodies*, that distinguish each other, there are Properties certainly known, that belong to a *Body* as a *Body*, and distinguish it from *Spirit*, and every Being that can be imagined; such are extension of Parts, and a Faculty of possessing a Place in proportion to 'em. These are for the most part Objects of Sense, and Self-evident; *but we cannot decipher or determine any peculiar Properties that belong to a Spirit as a Spirit, and distinguish it from Body or Matter, and every thing else*. We may indeed conceive *Spirits* as Finite Beings, by the resemblance of *Bodies*, and consequently make 'em exist in a place, and possess sometimes one place, and sometimes another; but we can form no Idea how they exist in places, as we do of *Bodies*. As for *Thinking, Reasoning,*

ing, and Willing, these seem to be too remote, to be the distinguishing Properties of a *Spiritual Substance* as such, being Faculties that seem to flow after its Radical or Original Properties are given. I am sure they cannot be so in the Opinion of my Author's Great Man, since in one place he tells us, [It's impossible without Revelation to discover (whether Omnipotency has not given to some Systems of matter fitly dispos'd) a Power to perceive or think. — And again, I see no Contradiction in it, That the first Eternal Thinking, Being, or Omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleas'd, give to certain Systems of created senseless Matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of Sense, Perception, and Thought.] Lock's *Human Understanding*, Lib. 4. Cap. 3. N. 6. And therefore I think it appears, there's a vast Difference between the Knowledge of *Spirits* and *Bodies*; insomuch that we may justly pronounce, *That no positive Ideas can be formed of Spirits, as Spiritual Substances, but what carry the*

Lock's  
*Human*  
*Underst.*  
lib. 4.  
cap. 3.

*the resemblances of Matter in 'em*; other Ideas must be form'd by comparing 'em with Matter, and pronouncing what they *are not*, rather than what they are.

But, *Thirdly*, let us examin the Measures and Extent of *Humane Knowledge*, with respect to the *Object*, as it is Finite or Infinite. As for the Knowledge of Finite Objects, an Estimate may be taken from what has been deliver'd on the two preceeding Arguments, the Subject of which being chiefly Finite Objects: The present Enquiry then is, after the Knowledge of Infinite Objects; and here certainly the Nature of the Being that *thinks* and *knows*, will determine the Case, I mean, demonstrate the *Imperfection of Humane Knowledge*; for *it's an Absurdity in Terms, as well as in the Nature of the Thing, to imagine that a Finite Mind should gain a perfect Comprehension of an Infinite Being*; insomuch, that it seems no Presumption to affirm, That GOD, by vertue of His Omnipotence, after He hath instated us in the

the Beatifick Vision, and discover'd things that *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor Heart conceiv'd*; or, in a word, after we have seen Him as He is, cannot possess us with an adequate Idea of His Immense and Infinite Being: So that with respect to the Godhead we must affirm, That our Ideas are made up of Negatives, and consequently with *Clemens Alex.* affirm, That we rather know God by concealing what He *is not*, than what He *is*: \* Or, at least, if we attempt any positive Conceptions, we are forced to shadow 'em forth by some Finite Ideas which we have taken up, and are already implanted in us. Thus the Divine Attribute of Wisdom we are forc'd to resemble by a Faculty of *Discerning* and *Comprehending*, infinitely surpassing the Sphere of *Humane Knowledge*. Thus the Imensity of God, by a vast space, or an Idea that is without Bounds or Limits, or is not to be circumscrib'd.

Thus

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\* ἡ δὲ οὐσία οὐ δεῖ μὴ εἶναι γινώσκουσα.  
Strom. lib. 5.

Thus Eternity, by an endless Succession of Time. Thus we see, after our nicest Conceptions, and after the most accurate Characters and Descriptions from *Revelation* it self, we are forced to call in *Finite Objects*, and measure the Blessed Attributes of our Creator by *Finite Ideas*; an Undertaking so unworthy of him, that it seems to be a piece of petty *Larceny*, or rather a lesser sort of *Idolatry*, as 'tis a kind of Representation of the Invisible God, by things that are seen, by a kind of *Gold*, or *Wood*, or *Stone*, graved in the shallow Understandings of Impotent Men. Here our Weakness, our Blindness, plainly discovers it self; for tho' Knowledge in *Finite Objects* may appear bright and shining, here it must suffer an Eclipse, and lye confounded in depth of *Mystery*; and, in a word, humbly make *St. Paul's* Recognition: *O the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom, and Power, and Immensity of God! how unsearchable, &c.*

But,

But, *Fourthly*, let us descend to the last Stage of *Humane Knowledge*, I mean that about matters of *Revelation*. And, first, it's certain that pure Matters of *Revelation* are things of which the Mind, by its own intrinſick Light, can form no Ideas; and conſequently we cannot pretend to know any thing more of them, than God in a reveal'd way is pleas'd to communicate. It's true, He ſeems to be oblig'd to communicate Himſelf in ſuch a manner, that His Revelations, at leaſt, may bear a reſemblance to ſome of thoſe Ideas we have already conceiv'd, or by the Power of Natural Reason can attain to. Thus does He reveal a Saviour that is GOD-Man, he's oblig'd to aſcribe ſuch Characters of Divinity to him, as are agreeable to the reveal'd Characters of the Godhead, and thoſe Ideas we can form of it; and in like manner as to his Humanity; for otherwiſe I cannot conceive how any reveal'd Truth can be imprinted on the Mind, without Special Inſpiration. But then, on the other hand, *when*  
God

God publiſheth a reveal'd Truth in ſuch Characters as ſuffice to inform us what he intends by it, viz. a Saviour that is GOD-Man, or the like, he is not oblig'd (neither is it any way requiſite to the reception of a reveal'd Truth) to demonſtrate the modus of the Union of the two Natures: Firſt, Becauſe the Subject of Revelation being Matters not attainable by Reason, and God the Author of them, as long as we have an Idea of the thing, or an Idea of what God propoſes to be believ'd, the *modus* of it is to be placed on the Infinite Power and Veracity of God. Secondly, Becauſe a leading Deſign of Revelation being to eſtabliſh a Confidence in God's Power and Veracity, in order to an abſolute Obedience and Worſhip, He did not intend to make us Philoſophers, but reveal'd what was uſeful and neceſſary, and directs us to adore, when we cannot comprehend.

From what has been deliver'd we may form two or three Inferences; 1<sup>ſt</sup>, With reſpect to this laſt Argument, Whatever our Attainments

ments may be in Matters of Sense and Natural Reason, it appears, that pure Matters of Revelation lye at a great distance from us; and consequently Knowledge cannot penetrate much beyond the Surface, since they are not only things in their own nature profound and intricate, but all our Discoveries rest on the good Will and Pleasure of GOD, that communicates 'em. And therefore, if Revelation itself tells us, we know but in part, or imperfectly, we may safely affirm it, and place all Difficulties on the Imperfections of Humane Knowledge, or the Depths and Mysteriousness of Reveal'd Truths. 2dly, It's a notorious Absurdity to argue from Ideas of Objects of Sense, or Material Objects against Immaterial ones; or Finite against Infinite, much more against Reveal'd ones. For it manifestly appears, that the Measures of Humane Knowledge are to be taken from each respective Object; for, as every Object hath a distinct Essence or Nature, so it hath distinct Properties and

Modes

Modes peculiar to its Nature; and the Ideas we conceive of the one, may not reach or measure the other. This is even so clear, that even in Properties that are common to several Objects, such as *Spirits* and *Bodies*, when apply'd to their respective Objects, carry no manner of Resemblance to each other.

Thus it's an inseparable Property of a *Spirit* and *Body* to occupy a Place, and yet the manner of existing in a Place is, no doubt, vastly different; insomuch, that I cannot find how any Ideas of the *Ubi* of *Bodies* can conclude any thing against that of *Spirits*, much less measure or define it. And, by a Parity of Reason, we may say as much of the Unity of a *Body*, and the Unity of an Infinite Spirit; for the Unity of the Godhead or the Divine Essence may be preserv'd, and yet communicate it self to Three Personal Subsistences: and it must be absurd to deny this, because it will not comport with our common Ideas of the Unity of a *Body*. 3dly, In Matters of Revelation,

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tion,

tion, it's as absurd to Argue against Reveal'd Truths, when the thing reveal'd is describ'd in such a manner, that we may know what is intended by it, because we cannot comprehend the Modus of it; since this would oblige us to reject several things, even in Objects of Sense, that are hitherto Unquestionable. What I have hitherto deliver'd, is by way of Principle; and I shall stand by it as such, in defiance of the utmost Attempts of our *assuming Reasoner*; and having laid this Foundation, I promise my self Success, in unraveling his *Arguments* and *Positions*.

And first, to take him in the order we find him, before he gives you a State of the Question, he begins with the main *Burden of his Song*, and introduces you with some Sarcastical Reflections, upon the Managements, and Maxims of *Divines*, about Religion. As if the generality of Christians had no Notion of Religion, but Mystery; and *Divines* unanimously owned their Ignorance about it, [*Whilst they gravely tell us, we must adore what we cannot comprehend*]; and yet

yet majestically obtrude contradictory Comments, as infallible Demonstrations of an unfathomable Mystery.

It's visible this whole Paragraph is spent upon the Clergy; for, who are to account for Mens Ignorance or absurd Notions in Religion, but those whose Business it is to instruct and remove 'em? Again; Who are to answer for Contradictions, but the Clergy, that resolve all into unfathomable Mystery, and yet by their peremptory Comments pretend to unravel all to a Demonstration? This is a Strain of impregnated Malice, that runs thro' the whole Book; where the Clergy, by Insinuation, Consequence, or downright Assertions, are charg'd with Imposture, as if they had industriously combin'd to resolve all Religion into Mystery, even to the carrying on of Contradictions: For in one place he makes it an *Asylum* or Shelter to their Ignorance; in another, an Artifice of Usurpation, to oblige the Laity to admit nothing as a *Branch of their Creed*,

till it hath been ratified from their *Confessor's Chair*. In a word, he represents 'em as Introducers of *Deism*; he might have added, as *Subverters of all Religion too*, since he makes 'em labour in nothing but Absurdities and Contradictions. And now you have the Character or Temper of the Man, and see where his poyson'd Arrows are directed. I shall with Patience, or rather Contempt, pass by all Structures of this kind, and content myself with the Confidence of wiping off his Calumnies by confuting his Positions. To return then,

As for the Comments of some Divines, neither the Church, nor Body of the Clergy are to account for the Indiscretions which Heat or Passion has surpriz'd some of them into; but, I'm perswaded, the Comments of others will stand the Test of Reason and Argument, to establish those Truths we call MYSTERIES, better than those of his Faction or Perswasion, to shake or overturn 'em.

As for the Maxim that instructs  
us

us to *Adore what we cannot Comprehend*, I think it's extreamly proper where we can prove a *Mystery*; for if God recommends an Article of Faith that exceeds the Comprehension of a Finite Mind, we may rest satisfied with an imperfect Idea, (even tho' it be no more than what is needful to point out to us what God intends by it) and then surrender our Judgments to His Infinite Veracity for the rest: A considerable Instance of Obedience (even the Obedience of *Faith*) as well as Adoration.

After this, he presents us with the Opinions of some particular Persons, or, at least, the Fictions of his own Brain, concerning the Authority of *Fathers, Councils, and Scripture*, and the Rules of interpreting it: But I'm concern'd to assign what Deference is to be paid to *Fathers* or *Councils*, or what Rules to be observ'd in interpreting *Scripture*, till he thinks fit to charge our *Constitution with Error in these matters*. This is foreign to the Argument we are now engag'd in. The next  
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thing he presents us with, is, Two Opinions of nameless Parties concerning the Use of Reason in Religion, and the Sence of Scripture; and, at last, makes all sides (that differ from his Notions) joyn in this Position, (for I can put no other gloss on his words, when he affirms) That both from different Principles agree, [*That several Doctrines of the New Testament belong no further to the Enquiries of Reason, than to prove them Divinely reveal'd; and, that they are properly Mysteries still, Ib. N. 6.*] That there are Doctrines in the New Testament that may be properly call'd Mysteries still, I do not question; but I can evince in the Sequel of this Tract. But I cannot find where the Church of England has declar'd herself, That Reason hath nothing to do with some Reveal'd Doctrines, but only to prove them divinely reveal'd; for, certainly, *Faith it self is a rational Assent to a Divine Truth; and Reason will not only be concern'd to enquire and prove, whether God hath deliver'd it, but to form some Idea* (tho'

(tho' an imperfect one) of the Nature of this Truth; at least, such an Idea as will convince us what it is God proposes to our Belief.

Else we assent to we know not what. But after the utmost Researches of Reason, our very Reason may inform us, that there may be a great deal in this Truth or Doctrine, with respect to the Nature or Modes of the thing, which She can by no means comprehend, and consequently may still be justly accounted a Mystery.

And now we come to his own Positions: [*On the contrary we hold, — That nothing reveal'd, whether as to its manner or existence, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phænomena of Nature; and that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it, and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly* called a MYSTERY. This he proposes as the State of the Question, agreeable to the Title of his Book, and consequently all that follows is only a confirmation or making good

N. 7.

of this Position. I must confess, I should be so fair to him, as to wait his Arguments; but because nothing shall stick upon the Reader, I shall make something of a return to such Decretory Assertions, in the order we find them:

And, *First*, this great Reasoner seems to play the Sophister, and express himself in a very ambiguous manner: He tells us, That no Reveal'd Truth is exempted from the Disquisitions of Reason. And truly, if he intends no more, than that the sublimest Reveal'd Truths may be examin'd by Reason, as far as she is able to comprehend them, we shall entirely joyn with him; for Revelation is thus far an Address to the Reason of Mankind, and she may lawfully endeavour to discover and conceive as much of their manner and existence as possible; *Provided she does not reject what she cannot comprehend, and that too upon this very Argument, Because she cannot comprehend the whole Manner and Existence of them.*

Thus far Reason may be concern'd,  
and

and yet Reveal'd Truths may be justly said to be above Reason, and mysterious, and consequently his Positions do by no means answer his Design, which is to prove, That Nothing is mysterious, or above Reason.

But if he intends, that Matters of Revelation, both with respect to their Manner and Existence, may be scann'd and comprehended by Reason, as easily as the *Phænomena* of Nature; this we utterly deny, and with very good reason too: *1<sup>st</sup>*, Because there's no connexion in the Consequence, the *Phænomena* of Nature are often Objects of Sense, and of a finite nature: But there are reveal'd matters that are in their very frame spiritual and infinite, and consequently not to be comprehended by a finite Mind or Reason, *much less with that ease and clearness that Objects of Sense are convey'd to the Mind.* Again, Matters of Sense are knowable and comprehensible by the Powers of Natural Reason; but there are Matters of *Revelation* that are not only incomprehensible in their

their own nature, but knowable no further than God is pleas'd to communicate or impart to us. This is clear from what has been already laid down and concluded, and therefore this can be no Consequence; the *Phænomena* of Nature are easily comprehensible, therefore all matters of *Revelation* are so. This is so absurd, that I do not question but I shall make it appear in the Sequel of this Discourse, "That there are some "Matters of Revelation, which if "scann'd by Ideas of Objects of "Sence, carry the appearance of "Contradictions; and yet this can "be no Argument against the Truth "of 'em, or that we are mistaken in "the purport of the Holy Ghost, (as "the *Socinians* would have it) when "what we contend for is represented in the clearest Characters and "Descriptions. And yet, this is the top of our Adversary's Reasonings. But, 2dly, as for Reveal'd Matters being *mysterious*, or *above Reason*, it's already concluded, That the radical Essence of Objects of Sence, and much more the Modes of their Properties,

or

or their Existence, are above the Comprehension of Reason: If so, what hath been deliver'd upon Matters of *Revelation*, will oblige us to conclude, against our Adversary, "That they cannot be fully comprehended in their Nature or Existence, much less in the *Modus* of "it; and consequently, that they "are in the highest sence *mysterious*, "and *above Reason*.

But to proceed, in the next place he entertains you, pursuant to the Notions of his great Man, with a large account what Reason is, and what she is not; the Means of Information, and Ground-Perfwasion: And I must freely own, that I can for the most part agree with him, and his great Man; at least it is not requisite to enter upon a nice Examination of every Paragraph, because I find he makes no particular Application of what he has so elaborately delivered in several Chapters, to prove his main Design. He tells us, Chap. 4. Sect. 1. [*That the Ground of Perfwasion is Evidence, and Evidence he defines, an exact Conformity of our*

*Ideas*

*Ideas, or Thoughts, with their Objects, or Things we think upon.]* The Description, I think, is well enough; but all this concludes nothing to prove what he contends for, *viz.* That nothing is above Reason; for the imperfect Ideas of Infinite and Incomprehensible Beings, must carry a Resemblance, or Conformity to the Object, or the Characters of an Incomprehensible Being; and yet it does not follow, but our Ideas are imperfect, and that there is a great deal in the Object, of which we cannot form any clear Idea. Indeed, if this were not so, he might justly infer, That there's nothing above Reason in Revelation. In a word, since he hath so industriously stated the Nature of Reason and Humane Knowledge, he should have proved, *That there are no degrees of Evidence, or Knowledge, with respect to the Nature of the Object, or Means of Information: That we have as clear and compleat an Idea of Infinite Beings as Finite, of an Infinite Spirit as an Object of Sense: That reveal'd Objects occur by the same way as Objects of Sense*

*Sence do; or, That the Extent of reveal'd Knowledge, does not depend on the Good Will and Pleasure of God, in communicating what he pleaseth on every Object.* This would have clear'd off all Dispute, and proved what he thinks he's able to evince, *viz.* That the Evidence of all the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind, is as infallible as our own Being, *Cap. 4. N. 14.* That what is reveal'd in Religion, may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, Water, or the like, *Seet. 3. Cap. 2. N. 12.]* Or, in a word, that there's nothing in Religion, or Revelation mysterious, or above Reason. The two latter of these Paradoxes will receive such Replies as are proper in the Sequel of this Discourse; but I cannot pass the first without a few Remarks: And, to put the most favourable Construction on an Ambiguous Assertion, I presume, he affirms, *That the Evidence of our Ideas which we form of the several Acts or Operations of the Mind, (viz. Thinking, Contemplating, Know-*

*ing*

ing or Comprehending) are as infallible as that of our Beings. This is a Maxim advanc'd to prove, That we are to have the same Evidence in all speculative Ideas, and consequently in all Ideas of pure Matters of Revelation; for this is his Application of it: [*Let us now but strictly require this Evidence in all the Agreements and Disagreements of our Ideas in Things merely speculative, &c. Ib.*] To shew the Weakness or Inconclusiveness of his Arguments, and the Falseness of his Positions, I shall instance in the general Act or Operation of the Mind, that of *Thinking*. And,

First, If he intends no more than that we have an Evidence (that we *think*, when we actually *think*, or that we have a Faculty to *think*) as infallible as that of our *Being*, I will easily joyn with him: But, can this be an Argument, that all our Ideas of Speculative Objects, particularly of all Matters of Revelation, (that are form'd by *Thinking*) rest upon an Evidence as clear as that of our *Being*? Again, If he contends for an Idea of the *Nature of Thinking*, that  
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carries an Evidence in it, as clear and infallible as that of our *Being*; I say, we cannot form an Idea of the *Nature of Thought*, but by retreating to some particular Instance or Object of *Thought*, and reflecting how the *Mind* exercises itself upon it; and before we can form a perfect Idea of the *Nature of Thought*, we must comprehend or discern the *manner* of the performance, and this will carry us into a great many Difficulties and Conjectures. We may indeed conclude, that *Thought* requires the application of the Object to the Mind, or rather the application of the Mind to the Object, which may justly be called *Attention*. Thus far the Idea of *Thinking* is clear and evident: But then, if we enquire into the *manner* how this or that Object is communicated or apply'd to the Mind, this seems to be inconceivable, even in Objects of Sense; for, who can pretend to describe how Material Objects are imprinted on an Immaterial Soul? Therefore we may conclude, that the Ideas we can form of the *Nature of Thinking*, and consequently  
of

of the Operations of the Mind, do not carry an Evidence in 'em as infallible as that of our Being.

But further ; Admit we, that we could describe the precise *Modus* of the *Nature of Thinking*, and consequently had an Idea that carries as much Evidence in it as that of our Existence, it's absurd to conclude, that the Mind can form Ideas of the highest Speculations equally evident and infallible. The Consequence, in plain terms, is no other than this, Because the Evidence of the Ideas of one particular Object is infallible, therefore the Evidence of the Ideas of every Object is so. And certainly this is a Position that must pronounce all our Ideas equally clear and perfect, and the Means of Information infallible, and consequently there can be no Objects falsely represented to the Mind, nor no Ideas false or imperfect. This is *Mystery* with a witness, or rather Positions that in his own Language are, [*The Primary and Uniterical Origin of all his Errors, Ib.*] But, I think, he sufficiently confutes himself in the following

lowing Paragraphs, when he pronounces some things dubious and obscure, and allows false Ideas may be contracted by Precipitancy or Inattention, by Affection and Prepossession, *N. 18.*

And now for the Second, where *Sect. II.* he introduces us with a Description of what is contrary to Reason, [*viz. What is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct Ideas, or to our common Notions, is contrary to Reason.*] Now truly this I think is a very lame, imperfect, or at least fallacious Description, unless it be ballanced with some Limitations and Restrictions.

As first, It can only hold in Objects of the same Species, or Nature ; *Thus we can only argue from Objects of Sense, against Objects of Sense, from Finite against finite, and from Matters of Revelation against pretended Matters of Revelation: For its the greatest Absurdity in Nature, to conclude any thing against any revealed Truth, or Doctrine, whose Object is purely Spiritual, and absolutely Infinite ; because it doth not accord with*

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*our Ideas in Objects of Sense; I'm sure the Holy Ghost instructs us better, in obliging us to compare Spiritual Things with Spiritual.* A sufficient Inhibition truly against discarding reveal'd Truths by any other Ideas, then what are formed from antecedent Notices of Revelation.

Thus for our Saviour's Divinity, before we yield an Assent to it, it's requisite the Characters and Properties of the Godhead, which are in the Books of Revelation ascrib'd to the Father, with respect to the Godhead, shou'd be ascrib'd to the Son. But then when this is done, it's absurd to reject this great Truth, as contrary to Reason, upon the force of an unreasonable Consequence, formed by comparing the incomprehensible Godhead with Objects of Sense.

Thus the Son cannot be God, because it must destroy the Unity of the Godhead; for the Unity of the Godhead must be destroy'd: Why? Because such Unity and Plurality can never be admitted in Objects of Sense, and consequently not in the sub-

sublimest Matters of Revelation. But what is this but to prostitute the Glory and Majesty of the Invisible and Incomprehensible Godhead, by the vilest Representations? What is it but a making him like Gold, Wood or Stone, or Things graven by Man's Art. Certain I am, such Maxims as these are the highest Contradictions to Reason; for if they might take place, it must shake the Foundation of all Revelation, even those lively Characters which the Word of God hath given of the Godhead: *If they must be scann'd, or measured by common Notions, or Ideas that result from Objects of Sense.*

Secondly, *Before we pronounce any thing contrary to Reason, we must be sure that we have a clear and perfect Comprehension of the Thing;* for tho' our Ideas that are seemingly repugnant to it, be never so clear, how shall we judge of the Repugnancy, as long as we cannot pretend to a perfect Idea on both sides? This I'm sure is a very reasonable Injunction, between Objects of Sense, and Matters of Revelation; so that if God

hath delivered any revealed Truth, and by comparing it with the Ideas and Characters of other reveal'd Truths, we must conclude, he intended such a particular thing, and at the same time discern the Incomprehensibleness of it; insomuch that we cannot form an adequate Idea; it's absurd to reject it, because this imperfect Idea will not comport with certain clear Ideas in Objects of Sense. *'Here if any Difficulties, Absurdities, or Contradictions arise, Reason will direct us to place 'em upon the Weakness of our Understandings, or our imperfect way of comprehending such unfathomable Objects; and with St. Paul, engage us to cry out, Who is sufficient for these things?* And now if my Adversary will add these Limitations to his Definition (as I'm perswaded he'll be forced to do) I do not question, but I can wipe off all the Absurdities produced in the following Chapter, at least by shewing their Impertinence to the Case before us. And on this account, I pass by 'em, as well as because there's nothing in 'em, that affects any thing al-

already delivered, but either confirms, or may be fairly solved by it. I therefore proceed to his Argument, *Sect. 2. Cap. 1. N. 4.*

The first thing I shall insist upon is, *[That if any Doctrine of the New Testament be contrary to Reason, we have no manner of Idea of it: To say for instance, that a Ball is White and Black at once.]* Here he sufficiently discovers himself; he tells us before, That whatever is repugnant to common Notions, is contrary to Reason; and what his common Notions are, the Instance before us, sufficiently informs; that is, in plain English, whatever does not comport with the most trite Ideas of Objects of Sense is contrary to Reason; and therefore the most sublime revealed Truths (whose Objects are Spirits, and Infinite Spirits, and consequently the Ideas we can pretend to, must be highly imperfect) because we cannot adjust them with the most common Ideas of Sense, are contrary to Reason. But the Absurdity of this Assertion, I hope, I have sufficiently exploded.

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But, to deliver my own Sentiments of matters of this nature once for all, I do believe there's an eternal and universal Harmony in Reason, as well as things both created and uncreated. The Reason of Mankind is certainly an immediate Transcript of Infinite Reason, and all the Councils, Decrees, and Declarations of Heaven are the Dictates of Infinite Reason, and the Reason of Mankind must be establish'd upon the unalterable Rules or Measures of Infinite Reason; and therefore there can be no Ideas of Infinite Truths or Objects (provided they are compleat and perfect, such as God can conceive of Himself) which really contradict the Rules and Measures of *Humane Reason*, if she were enabl'd to comprehend 'em as clearly as her Maker.

But yet, I think, I have made it appear, that after all the Researches of Reason, there are reveal'd Objects of which we can form but very imperfect Ideas, both with respect to their *Nature, Existence, and Modus*, and yet we may form such an Idea as

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instructs us what God intends we should believe.

From hence we may conclude, "That as their nature is peculiarly distinguished from all other Beings, so is the *Modus* of their Existence: So that it's highly absurd to deny our Assent to the Truth of it, because we can form no Idea that will comport with those we have form'd on *Objects of Sense*, and consequently adjudge it to be contrary to *Reason*. "This is a Contradiction to the "Eternal Laws of right *Reason*, "which, in Cases of this nature, direct us to fix the Absurdity or Contrariety on the Imperfections of "our Understanding, or the Falseness of the Rule, in judging *Matters of Revelation* by *Objects of Sense*.

In a word, from what hath been said, we may, in express terms, affirm, That we can form imperfect Ideas of *Matters of Revelation*, so far as to know what God proposes to our Belief: And yet, when we proceed to examine the *Modus* of their Existence, we cannot reconcile

it with the Ideas of *Objects of Sense*; and, for all this, we must not pronounce any thing of this nature contrary to *Reason*; or esteem those imperfect Ideas, no Ideas at all.

Give me leave to illustrate this matter in an Instance which the *Socinian* chuses to advance his own Hypothesis, by exploding it; I mean, the *Divinity* of our *Saviour*: We affirm him to be possess'd with the *Fulness of the Godhead*, because his *Divinity* is describ'd in Characters that are peculiar to the Godhead, and such as correspond with those Ideas of the Godhead as are form'd by the Assistance of *Revelation*. He rejects his *Divinity*, because he proceeds further, and examines the *Modus* of its Existence, with respect to the Unity of the Godhead, and its Union with Humane Nature; and thereupon forms a *Modus* by some common Ideas or Notions, and then compares it with other Ideas of the same rank and quality, and rejects those Ideas which Scripture has given us of his *Divinity*, by pronouncing such a *Revelation* absurd and

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contrary to Reason, because the *Modus* of its Existence with the Unity of the Godhead and Humanity, (a thing form'd and hammer'd out of his own shallow Understanding,) does not comport with common Ideas of *Objects of Sense*. Here, I think, is a Complication of Absurdities, or things that run counter to the eternal Measures of right Reason; the Godhead of our Blessed Saviour is rejected and deny'd, as contrary to Reason, not because we want Revelation for it, since we may read it in the clearest Characters; but we must expound these away, 1<sup>st</sup>, Because we cannot comprehend the *Modus* of its Existence (a thing that often exceeds our Comprehension) even in Philosophical Disquisitions. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Because we cannot form a *Modus* that comports with common Ideas or Notions in *Objects of Sense*. "But, if Consequences of this nature are suffer'd to take place, "against such legible Characters of "Divinity, it must overturn those "Ideas of a God, which Revelation "and Natural Reason hath furnish'd  
" us

"us with, since the Characters of  
"both are equally clear and un-  
"deniable.

I have dwelt too long on this Argument, but not without Design, because I would not be oblig'd to make a formal Return to every little Passage that runs against us, or dispels every Speck of a Cloud that's rais'd upon Sophistry or False Arguing: I am sure I have offer'd enough to take off the Force of what he hath suggested in the following Paragraph, N. 5. for, he's a compleat Conjuror, raises his own Devil, and then lays it, frames an Objection, and gives his own Answer to it; it's this: [*If any will think to evade the Difficulty, by saying, That the Ideas of certain Doctrines may be contrary indeed to common Notions, yet consistent with 'em-selves, — he's but just where he was.*] Now, I have already deliver'd the Measures of forming *reveal'd Ideas*, not by comparing 'em with *Objects of Sense*, but *Spiritual Things* with *Spiritual*: I will admit, indeed, it may be done by common Notions; if he'll restrain his common Notions,

ons, as he docs in the close of his Paragraph, or, at least, with some Improvement added to 'em; for I can freely subscribe: [*That we cannot otherwise discern His Revelations, but by their conformity with our Natural Notices of Him,*] G O D he means; or, at least, those Improvements we receive of Him from Revelation. And in this sence our Saviour's Divinity is not contrary to common Notions; for we can form an Idea of it agreeable to those Characters which Revelation and Natural Reason gives us of the Godhead; but, then the Difficulty lies in comprehending the Union and Existence of the two Natures together, which we call the *Modus* of the thing; and this, we say, is not to be measur'd by common Notices, for, to a Finite Mind, it's Incomprehensible: "But then it  
"is not a Doctrine of Christianity,  
"that we should comprehend it;  
"much less is it a Doctrine of Reason  
"or Christianity that we should exclude or cashier the clearest Characters of our Saviour's Divinity or  
"Incarnation from being a Doctrine  
"of

“ of Christianity, because we cannot  
 “ comprehend the manner of the U-  
 “ nion of the two Natures, nor form  
 “ any clear Idea of it, at least, such  
 “ as will comport with common No-  
 “ tions. It's true, we may resemble  
 it, as it is done in one of our Creeds.  
 As the reasonable Soul and Flesh is  
*One Man*, so G O D and Man is *One*  
 CHRIST ; but we do not advance a  
 Similitude into a compleat Idea, or  
 an Article of Faith.

But, to offer a word or two more,  
 if this method of Arguing may be  
 admitted, I cannot conceive but it  
 must explode the Belief of the Soul,  
 or any Principle distinct from Mat-  
 ter, because we cannot fix the *Modus*  
 of its Union, or conceive an Idea of  
 the manner of its incessant Inter-  
 courses with the Body.

To conclude this Argument, from  
 what is said, I think here's enough  
 to defeat our Adversary's Triumphs,  
 even over his own Objection ; for,  
 we may safely affirm, That as the  
 Nature of the Godhead is distin-  
 guish'd by Properties peculiar to it  
 self, so we may justly conclude, that  
 it

it has a manner of Existence with  
 Humanity so peculiar to itself, that  
 we must not pretend to comprehend  
 it, by comparing it with Objects of  
 Sense ; and yet we can freely own,  
 that there's neither Necessity nor  
 Possibility of its being comprehend-  
 ed by us, or of determining what is  
 the precise *Modus* of it.

And thus much of his Notion of  
*Self-consistence*. And as for his Sar-  
 castical prophane way of Arguing,  
 when he tells us, That *Four may be cal-  
 led Five in Heaven* ; he might know,  
 ‘ That *Numbers* are only *empty Deno-  
 minations*, and *no Arguments* to be  
 ‘ form'd from 'em, but as apply'd to  
 ‘ *Things* ; and then, if we consider  
 ‘ Heavenly Objects with respect to  
 ‘ the manner of their Existence, a  
 ‘ *Unity* and a *Trinity* may be con-  
 ‘ sistent, for any thing he knows to  
 ‘ the contrary. And this is sufficient  
 to prevent any modest Man from  
 pronouncing Contradictions upon  
 such unfathomable Truths, by mea-  
 suring their *Modus* by Common No-  
 tions, things that exceed our Com-  
 prehension as much as they are be-  
 sides

sides the Business of our Curiosity or Faith. Here we may discern the Origin of his ill Reasonings *to be want of distinguishing Things*, I mean the *Being* of a *Thing*, and the *Manner* of its *Existence*, with respect to itself, or as 'tis united to something else.

From hence I pass to *N. 9.* for nothing intervenes that directly concerns the present Controversie, or, at least, has not had a Reply to it. And here I cannot joyn with him, when he affirms, That a *seeming Contradiction*, (even in Matters of Revelation) is to us as much as a real one; for, I think, the Difference is palpable in all cases, but especially in Contradictions upon the *Nature of Things*; for 'We call that a *seeming Contradiction*, when there's a Repugnancy discovered, but we have not a clear and perfect Conviction of it: And, I suppose, this must arise for want of a clear and perfect Idea of each Term, or rather Object, of the Contradiction; and, till this is gain'd, Reason must suspend, and neither determine that she is in the right or wrong, till fresh Evidence offers to turn

turn the Scale. But now, a *real Contradiction*, or rather a *clear Contradiction*, (for it should pass under this Name with respect to our knowledge of it) is, "When we have a clear and unquestionable Idea of both parts of it, or both Objects, and thence conceive an irreconcilable Repugnancy. But now, in matters of pure Revelation, whose Nature is spiritual and infinite, I cannot see how Reason can direct us to pronounce or determine *real* or *clear Contradictions* between them and Common Notions, because we cannot pretend to an *adequate* or *clear Idea*; I mean, that which is comparatively so, with respect to those of *Objects of Sense*, and consequently cannot decree what *real Repugnancy* lies between them: And therefore, if seeming Contradictions or Difficulties arise, by comparing *reveal'd Truths* with common *Ideas* or *Notions*, Reason cannot (as this Author would have it) pronounce a *real Contradiction*, and suspect there can be no *reveal'd Truth*, especially when there are the clearest Characters of the thing

thing corresponding with *Ideas* of the same nature. “Here Reason must  
 “oblige us to place the Contradicti-  
 “ons on our Inabilities in compre-  
 “hending Matters of this nature, and  
 “yield an Assent upon the Authority  
 “of Infinite Power and Veracity :  
 For when Revelation has set forth  
 the thing in the clearest Characters,  
 and the very same in which the fun-  
 damental Article of all Revelation is  
 represented to us, I mean that of the  
 Godhead, if seeming Contradictions  
 must be suffer’d to discard it, it’s im-  
 possible we can yield any Assent to  
 the Being of a GOD ; for, where the  
 Characters are as clear for one as the  
 other, and both rest on the same Au-  
 thority, that of *Revelations* to dispute  
 the one, must *call in question* the  
 other.

Proceed we, in the next place, to  
 consider what is deliver’d on the Au-  
 thority of *Revelation*, he means that  
 which is Divine, *Cap. 2. N. 11.* And  
 here I cannot be reconcil’d to the  
 Distinction he gives us : [*Revelation*  
*is not a necessitating Motive of Assent;*  
*but*

but a *Mean of Information*.] Now, truly I can ſee no Abſurdity in ſaying, That the ſame thing may be a *Mean of Information*, and a *Motive of an Aſſent* too, for an *Information* carries an *Aſſent* along with it proportionable to the *Credit* or *Authority* of the *Informer*. Now *Revelation* is certainly a *Mean of Information*, ſince it preſents us with new *Objects*, which *Natural Reason* could never diſcover; But, beſides this, it is an *Information* that proceeds from *Infinite Veracity*, attended with *Infinite Power*, *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*: Herein it's diſtinguiſh'd from *Human Revelation*; And therefore, when once we are aſſur'd (ſo as to yield a firm *Aſſent*) that ſuch a particular *Article* is reveal'd, it becomes the moſt neceſſitating *Motive of Aſſent*; I mean, to the *Truth of it*; becauſe, this being granted, here's *Infinite Veracity*, *Wiſdom*, *Power* and *Goodneſs* againſt our *Imperfect Conceptions*, and the ſeeming *Difficulties* founded in 'em. When once we aſſent or yield it to be *Divine Revelation*, I think, we may ſafely affirm, againſt this *Reasoner*,

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[ *We may believe purely upon his Word, without Evidence, (at least such as he requires) in the things 'emselfes* ]. Here the Authority of him that speaks, not my Conception of the thing, or what he says, is the Ground of my Perswasion].

But, to proceed, as for what this Reasoner says of God's Omnipotence and Contradictions, N. 13. no one is so silly to imagine, that real Contradictions are an Object of Omnipotence; but there may be Contradictions which we apprehend as real, that in truth are but seeming ones, and particularly when we cannot fully comprehend the nature of both the Terms or Objects; and it's already concluded, that in matters of Revelation Reason will often direct us to suspect our Judgments, and esteem 'em as such: And then, I hope, there's "no Absurdity in Pronouncing, seeming Contradictions and Impossibilities, a proper Subject of God's Omnipotence: Thus far our Saviour will bear us out, for all things are possible with God, Matt. xix. 26.

But, to pursue him a little further, he tells us, N. 16. speaking of God's Re-

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Revelations, [ *His Words must be intelligible, and the Matter possible. And as for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of G O D, than from that of Man, for the conceiv'd Ideas of Things are the only Subjects of believing, and therefore all Matters reveal'd by G O D or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible: We are then to expect the same degree of Perspicuity ( he means, with respect to the knowledge of the Object ) from G O D as from Man, tho' more of Certitude from the first than the last: he means with respect to the Veracity of the Publisher. ]*

Ans. What has already been deliver'd upon Matters of Revelation, I hope, will satisfy any reasonable Man, how far a reveal'd Truth is requir'd to be intelligible. It's concluded, GOD has discover'd so much of the Nature of reveal'd Truths as is useful or necessary; and consequently, He has, at least, discover'd so much as is sufficient to inform us, upon Principles of Revelation, what He proposes to our Belief, but He did not intend to make us Philosophers, so as

to enable us to comprehend the *Modus* of reveal'd Truths, or form an Idea of the Manner of Existence, in order to believe the Truth of 'em. This we cannot pretend even in Physical Disquisitions; nay, I think, it's justly concluded, that in Matters of Revelation, which are for the most part Spiritual and Infinite, we are not to dispute the Possibility of their Existence, by measuring 'em by *Objects of Sense*; for, in reality, this is the same with comprehending the *Modus* of their Existence, "since we cannot absolutely declare against the Possibility of their Existence, without a Faculty of comprehending and determining the *Modus* of it, and passing an Estimate upon it as absurd and impossible: And therefore we say, That Matters of Revelation are to be understood so far as to conceive what GOD proposes to our Belief, but not to comprehend the *Modus* of their Existence; such *Ideas* are not the necessary *Subjects* of Faith.

Again, In Humane Revelation the Object is *Matters of Fact*, and things we

we attain to by the Testimony of our Senses, and consequently are things that lye within the proper Verge of Humane Understanding.

Again, They are Discoveries made by Persons upon the same level with ourselves, and, consequently, such as are not only liable to be mistaken, but may sometimes industriously lead others into Mistakes. And both these are Arguments that will engage us to demand an absolute Comprehension of the Nature of the Thing, and all its Circumstances; so that before we can come to a final Determination, or yield an Assent to the Truth of any such Relation, "We must comprehend the Nature of it so exactly, "as to be able to judge, not only of the Possibility, but Probability of it. And, I hope, no one can have the Face to demand all this Evidence from GOD. Therefore we may conclude, against our Majesterial Reasoner, That the same degree of Perspicuity is not requir'd from GOD, as from Man. In a word, if we cannot form a perfect Idea of reveal'd Truths, much less of the *Modus* of their Existence,

flence, we cannot judge of the Possibility of 'em: If indeed we were able to form an Idea of the *Modus* of their Existence, that will comport with common Notions, tho' this be not the true *Modus*, we may safely pronounce them possible; "but we cannot pretend to reject the Possibility of 'em, unless we could judge of the real *Modus*, and shew, that it's absurd and impossible: Therefore we may conclude, that all Matters reveal'd by GOD or Man, are not requir'd to be equally intelligible and possible.

But, to proceed, as for those Instances of Scripture, that follow in this or the next Chapter, to prove Christianity a rational intelligible Religion; they only prove, That Reason is a concurring Instrument in embracing all religious Truths, not by teaching us to comprehend the Nature of 'em, but to engage our Assent, where we cannot fully comprehend upon rational Motives and Convictions: "And we think we act upon rational Motives and Convictions in Matters of Revelation,

"tion, when we know as much of the thing as satisfies us, what it is "G O D proposes to our belief, and "yet find some things contain'd in "em incomprehensible in their own "nature, and rely upon God's Veracity, Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, rather than reject the whole, "because we know but in part. Nay further, in the case of Miracles, we grant, that Reason may judge of the reality of 'em, because they are Objects of Sense, and are to be examin'd by the Testimony of the Senses, by Ideas of Objects of Sense, and the Exercitations of Reason upon 'em, and because Miracles are the uncontrollable Demonstrations of the Spirit, or Means of Conviction, for proving the Divine Original of Revelation; "And we can freely grant, that "Reason must act by common Notions, to prove *Revelation* to be truly Divine: But when this is done, there's no Consequence that Reason must still measure reveal'd Truths by common Notions, and reject 'em if she cannot fully comprehend 'em, or if she cannot make 'em comport with common Notions; which is the thing

our Adversary labours to prove.

The remaining Instances, which only declare the Perspicuity of the *Moral Law* or *Christian Precepts*, an Ingenious Reader will presently discern how foreign and impertinent they are to his Design.

At the same rate he trifles, when he raises an Objection from the Corruption of *Humane Reason*; as if, by making his own Answers and Objections, he had vanquish'd all our Arguments, gain'd the Field, and might triumphantly maintain, *That there's nothing in the Christian Religion mysterious, or above Reason*; for, I do not anywhere find the Ch. of *England* fixes the Controversie on this Bottom, and therefore this is Reply enough to two of his Chapters, viz. 3, 4.

Sept. III.

And now we come to the Third Section, where we are introduc'd with an Account of what's *mysterious* and *above Reason*. I shall for the most part take his own Accounts of it, and therefore shall not much dispute any thing in the first Chapt. only I cannot forbear to remark, how lame or imperfect, or, at least, industriously equi-

equivocal, all his Descriptions are: He gives us two Significations of a *Mystery*, the first I shall not examine; his second is, (I suppose he speaks his own Opinion, else he should have declar'd the contrary) [*It is made to signify a thing of its own nature inconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Ideas, tho' it be never so much reveal'd.*] Indeed, I think the first part of this Description is a *Mystery*; tho', I suppose, he means, in the nature of the thing, or by reason of its Immensity, it's inconceivable to us, or with respect to *Humane Comprehension*; but then, who knows how far he intends to carry this, I mean, represent a *Mystery* inconceivable? If he intends it so as that we can form no *manner of Idea* of it, then he imposes a manifest Absurdity upon the World; for no one ever called that a *MYSTERY* that we could have no Notion of; for, *such a thing may be as well Nothing, as Mystery, for any thing we can tell.* And therefore *Mystery*, at least, supposes an *Imperfect or Inadequate Idea*, (as appears from all those Instances I have hitherto

to produc'd) otherwise we could not know what God proposes to our Belief. But then, if we enquire further into the thing, and endeavour to unravel the *Modus* of its Existence, we can either form no distinct Idea, or, at least, none that will comport with common Notions. And thus far we affirm, That *Mysteries* are not to be judg'd of by our *ordinary Faculties* and *Ideas*, tho' never so clearly reveal'd. N. 1.

I proceed to *Chap. 2.* where, after having promis'd a wonderful Perspicuity in the Case before him, he affirms, [ *That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a Mystery.* ] Now truly I'm much of his Mind, for I'm perswaded that no Finite Understanding can conceive all the several Properties of any one Being, at once in a distinct view: This is the Peculiar of an All-wise GOD; and if an adequate Idea must imply a distinct view of every Property at once, and Mystery oppos'd to it, every thing must be

Sett. 8.

be a Mystery to every intelligent Being but GOD: So that here's a *No-tion* rais'd, that proves nothing, and no one requires it. We will therefore pass this as an Unphilosophical Blunder; and describe an adequate Idea to be what he aims at, *viz. A clear and distinct Idea of the Nature and Properties of an Object.* This (he contends) cannot be fairly oppos'd to MYSTERY, because, in the Knowledge of Humane Bodies, GOD has sufficiently answer'd the Ends and Designs of it, by enabling us to comprehend the principal Properties of Bodies, and the Uses of 'em: And therefore what remains cannot be MYSTERY, N. 19, 20. This is truly a Reason which is more cogent on the other hand, as well in Philosophical as Reveal'd Disquisitions: GOD has discover'd, or enabl'd us to comprehend, as much as is useful or necessary in both these Cases; but, after all, we can pretend no further than some principal Properties: And since *Reason* tells us, there's a great deal undiscover'd and incomprehensible, we may justly affirm, That there

there are *Mysteries* in *Nature*, as well as *Revelation*; so that we are beholden to him for his *Argument*, tho' he had no Friendly Design in it. Indeed, if he would be content to carry us no further than the force of his *Argument* naturally tends, we should presently joyn in an amicable Accommodation, which is in other terms no more than this: "There can be no *Mystery* in *Revelation*, (he might have added, nor in *rerum natura*) "I mean, in this Notion of it; because we know as much as our Finite Understandings are capable of, "or as much as is necessary or useful. If this may be admitted, it's a substantial Reason to conclude against the Possibility of a *Mystery*.

But we may say there are *Mysteries*, not because we know not as much as is necessary and useful, but *because after we know the principal Properties of Things, or as much as is necessary or useful, we can discern a great deal which we cannot comprehend*. And this holds good not only in Matters of *Revelation*, but *Nature* too. Our *Adversary* confesses as much; for tho' we

we have a competent Idea of the *Properties* of *Bodies*, that is, as far as they are useful to us, yet we are not able to comprehend the *Modus* of their Operations, nor indeed the true Causes of a great many obvious Effects.

Again, In *reveal'd Truths* we can form, at least, an imperfect Idea of what GOD proposes to our belief. Thus we form an Idea of our *Saviour's Divinity*, from those Characters which *Revelation* and *Natural Reason* gives us of the *Godhead*. We believe him to be possess'd with the *fulness of the Godhead*, because the same Characters are ascrib'd to him that are ascrib'd to the *Father* in respect of the *Godhead*; but we cannot form an Idea of the Manner of the Union of this *Divinity* with *Humane Nature*, nor its Consistence with the *Unity* of the *Godhead*, at least so as to make it comport with common Notions: So that in respect of the *Modus* of things, whether as to their Existence or Operations, even in those of *Natural Bodies*, as well as *Matters of Revelation*, there are *Mysteries* in *Nature*,  
(and

(and that properly) as well as in *Revelation*.

Our *Adversary* indeed would call this an *Inadequate Knowledge*, but nothing *Mysterious* or above *Reason*; but I hope to prove it a *Mystery* even in the received sence of the Word, as well as the reason of the Thing, and that too on his own *Concessions* and *Principles*. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, It's certain his *Evasions* concerning *Inadequate Ideas* will do him no service, to take off the Denominations of *Mystery*, or above *Reason*; for we affirm, That Things are *Mysterious*, and above *Reason*, because we can form but very imperfect and inadequate Ideas of 'em. "It's certainly absurd to imagine that any thing can be *mysterious*, or above *Reason*, which we are able fully to comprehend; and it's equally absurd to say, that things are *mysterious*, when we can form no Idea at all, since we can pronounce nothing when we know nothing: But, to confess, that of most things we can form but imperfect and inadequate Ideas, is to prove a thing to be *mysterious*;

*sterious*; for, if we know and acknowledge, that our most improv'd Ideas are inadequate, we must conclude there's something behind, either as to the *Modus* or *Rationale* of Things, which Reason cannot comprehend. And I know no better denomination, than to say, That Things are in this respect *mysterious*, or above *Reason*.

To make up the strict Notion of *Mystery*, we are not to consider the Necessity or Usefulness of what we cannot comprehend; but the grand Question is, *Whether there are not Modes and Properties of Things, that by reason of the Imperfection of Human Understanding, or the Immensity or Intricacy of the Things themselves, cannot be comprehended by us?* For it is the 'Abstruseness or Inaccessibility of Things that make the *Mysteries*, not the Necessity or Usefulness of what is incomprehensible. And therefore if there be Things in this material World which we cannot comprehend, we may truly affirm, That there's a *Mystery* in *Nature*, or that *Natural Causes* or *Effects* are thus far

far above Reason, or *mysterious*; much more may we affirm it of Matters of Revelation: And therefore, to use the Instance of a vain insulting Adversary, *Tho' we live upon Water, and see and handle it daily, there may and is something in it mysterious, and above Reason, inasmuch as we cannot form an Idea of every thing that truly belongs to it.* And yet no wise Man will be tempted to make such a practical Inference as this Reasoner hath suggested, that is, *resolve* never to enquire into its Nature, nor imploy it in his House or Grounds \*. But, in

\*See Sect. 3. N. 10. Matters of Revelation, we know how inadequate our Ideas are, 'as much as *Finite* differs from *Infinite*, *Negative* from *Positive*, and *Sence* from *Spirit*: Must they not then contain things above Reason, because they are only thus inadequate?

But further, As for the original Import of the word MYSTERY, I am not concern'd to trace it in the primitive Uses of it, it's sufficient if by Custom it hath obtain'd another Import (it may be) every jot as proper as the former. Our Author owns, that

that in approved Classicks it's commonly taken for obscure and intricate Matters, such as cannot well be comprehended or seen into \*. And \* See N. this, I think, is equally proper with s. Sect. 3. that other describ'd by him, which implies something beyond a Veil, not discernable till that is remov'd: And in this sence the Types under the *Mosaick* Law he accounts *Mysteries*; for those which thro' the Imperfections or Weakness of Reason, or the Immensity, Distance, or Intricacy of the Object, may be as little discern'd as those that have a Veil over 'em; and then they seem to be equally *mysterious*, and *above Reason*. In a word, *Mystery* is something shut up from our View or Cognizance, and it is not material whether this be done by a Veil or other Impediments or Obstructions; and consequently *Mystery* and an *Inadequate Idea* may be very consistent; I do not mean, that which arises from affected Ignorance, but the Intricacy of the Object, and the Weakness of Humane Reason under its highest Improvements.

But, to clear up his Understanding in this matter, by a few Arguments drawn from his own Positions, the Riches of his own inexhausted Brain, he tells us, *Cap. 3. N. 27.* That *certain Gospel-Doctrines* are call'd Mysteries, with respect to the Jews, [*not that they knew nothing of 'em, but they were not clearly and fully reveal'd till the New Testament-times, being veil'd before by various Typical Representations, &c.*] Well, you see he allows *Mosaick Types* to be *Mysteries*, and gives the reason, Because they saw 'em thro a Veil; or, in *St. Paul's* Language, with respect to further Discoveries, *thro a Glass darkly*: And what is this, but that they knew them in part, or by inadequate Ideas? I'm sure our Knowledge is as much cramp'd in several of those Instances produc'd by our Author, from the Intricacy and Immensity of the Things 'emselfes, as those *Gospel-truths* shut up from the *Jews* by the *Mosaick Veil* of *Types* and *Figures*: 'And consequently, why is not the one as much 'a *Mystery* to us, as the other to the *Jews*, and for this very reason, be-

'cause

'cause we know them inadequately.

But, to go a little further with him, I remember, in the State of his Question, as well as in other places, he gives us to understand, That *all Reveal'd Matters may be judg'd of even by common Notions, both as to their Manner and Existence, as easily as the ordinary Phœnomena of Nature*; and therefore concludes, That *there's nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, or above it*; and, That *no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a MYSTERY*. This is the State of the Question; and what he asserts must be a Criterion, in judging what is *mysterious* or *above Reason*: So that we may hence conclude, and that upon his own Principles too, That that *Thing* whose Manner or Existence cannot be conceiv'd, even with as much ease and clearness as the ordinary *Phœnomena* of Nature, is a *Mystery*, and *above Reason*. Certainly here is a fair Concession, and such as will make things *mysterious*, because we can but form inadequate Ideas; for, as this Author confesses, we can form Ideas of the Beings of Things, and know as much

as is useful from their Properties and Effects, whilst we are ignorant of the manner of their Existence or Production: See N. 8, 11. — (the one of Plants, and the other of Rain). Here he manifestly fixes our inadequate Ideas upon the *Modus* of Things, with respect to their Operations and Existence; that is, our Ideas are inadequate, because we cannot decipher wherein their *Modus* consists, tho' we know their principal Properties by their Effects and Uses.

And now we may call in his own Principles to conclude against him, and affirm, That inadequate Ideas must necessarily imply a *Mystery*, for inadequate Ideas imply our Ignorance as to the *Modus* of Things, and that thing whose *Modus* cannot be comprehended, according to his own Principles, is *mysterious*, and *above Reason*. Here, I think, he pretends to *Out-do* the most improv'd Arts of *Priestcraft*, whilst he declares for nothing but *Reason*, and banishes *Mystery* out of the World, and yet imposes things that surpass the highest *Mystery*; since he labours to make the  
World

World embrace his *Contradictions* for the *undoubted Decrees of Reason*: [*This is, in his own language, trifling with a witness, or pitiful shifting or fooling, or what not, and such as discovers a mighty Scarcity of good Arguments, N. 13.*] But he hath not done with us yet, and therefore concludes with an obliging Proposal, [*If they will still be fooling, and call these things Mysteries, I'm willing to admit as many as they please in Religion, if they will allow me likewise to make mine as intelligible to others as these are to me, Ib.*]

I hope I have made good the first part, *That there are true and proper Mysteries, even in the Schools of Nature*. And, if so, it's manifest, notwithstanding his vain Triumphs, we have an Argument *à majori*, That there are *Mysteries in Revelation*: I say, it's a *majori* to every one but him, that has the Face to assert, *That an infinite incomprehensible Spirit is an Object equally intelligible with Objects of Sense, or with Wood or Stone*. As for the last part of his Proposal, I believe every one will consent, 'That he shall make all those reveal'd  
F 3 'Truths

'Truths we call *Mysteries*, as intelligible as he's able, provided he'll promise not to reject 'em, because he fails in his Undertaking; or, in a word, because he cannot make them compare with common Ideas or Notions.

And now, I hope, I have said enough to invalidate all the Arguments of this Chapter. But lest he should think me rude, or that I neglect him too much, I shall make some short Returns to a few Passages that are yet behind. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, He instructs us what it is to comprehend a Thing, viz. [*When its chief Properties, and their several Uses, are known to us; for to comprehend, in all correct Authors, is nothing else but to know; and as of what is not knowable we can have no Idea, so is it nothing to us.* I shall, for once, admit, that in the common Notion of Humane Perception or Comprehension, we think we know or comprehend a Thing sufficiently, when its chief Properties, and their several Uses, are known to us; but may we not at the same time discern, that there

there are others we cannot conceive, and that the *Modus* or precise Nature of those we know are inconceivable: And so we may, without Offence, or in a strict and proper way of Speech, affirm, That there's a great deal *mysterious* in the thing, and *above Reason*; and yet we do not pronounce it *above Reason*, (as he suggests, *ib.*) because we know no more than concerns us; but because there's something inconceivable, tho' to conceive it does not so directly concern us.

But, 2<sup>dly</sup>, as for that which is *mysterious* even in Matters of Revelation, we do not pretend that it is any thing to us; I mean, as if we were oblig'd to comprehend or define the precise *Modus* of the thing; *This is to be a Mystery and no Mystery*. However, since we discern in certain reveal'd Truths something which we cannot comprehend, we may believe those reveal'd Truths to be so far *mysterious*, 'and they so far concern us, as to pay 'the Obedience of Faith to 'em, and 'not reject the Whole, because we 'cannot comprehend Every-thing 'that belongs to 'em. This ought

to be an Eternal Rule to our Author in matters of Revelation, because it's founded upon his own Words and Principles: We believe the Divinity of our Saviour, because we have not only its Uses set forth, but we have it represented in the principal Properties of the Godhead, even such as are ascrib'd to GOD the Father; and consequently, in the Sence of this Author, we may be said to comprehend or know this Divine Truth. Therefore if any thing arises as to the *Modus* of its Existence, or otherwise, that is *mysterious*, (not knowable, or of which we can have no Idea) his own Rule directs him, that this is nothing to him, and consequently is by no means to be an Argument against this Divine Truth: I'm sure, if 'tis not ridiculous not to supersede our Disquisitions in matters that do not directly concern us, (another *Affertion* of his, *ib.*) it's undoubtedly ridiculous to make Disquisitions in such Cases, and make them an Argument for rejecting the clearest reveal'd Truths; which is the constant Practice of the Modern Reasoners or Disputers of this World, the Socinians.

But,

But, to proceed, the next thing remarkable is, a compendious Rule to acquire Useful Knowledge, *N. II. viz. Not to trouble ourselves nor others with what is Useless were it known, or what is impossible to be known at all.* Whereas in the Paragraph immediately preceeding, he seems to charge us with saying, That Things are above Reason, because we know no more than concerns us, or is useful. And yet allowing this Notion, he tells us, that it is ridiculous to supersede our Disquisitions about it upon that Score; that is, according to his own Notion, tho' we know as much of it as concerns us, or is useful. A bless'd Law-giver truly, to institute Contradictions almost with the same Breath; for, I think, he cannot avoid the Charge, without flying to that which is as abominable in his very Thoughts as this reproachful to his Reason; I mean, by Pleading he intended a Mystery.

And now, having given you enough of the Doctrinal part, he carries us to Application; but truly, I hope I have disabled him so visibly in

in the former, as supercedes the Necessity of a formal Reply to the latter. I shall only recite the Application he has made, and rather refer than answer; [*1st, That no Christian Doctrin, no more than any ordinary piece of Nature, can be reputed a Mystery, because we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it.*] As for what may be attributed to inadequate Ideas, I have said enough in this Chapter; and tho' we may not say, 'That the want of an adequate Idea is the *formalis ratio* that constitutes a *Mystery*, yet our Inabilities in comprehending some things that are really lodg'd in it, or really belong to it, makes it a *Mystery*; and as is already prov'd with as good reason as those things he counts *mysterious*, viz. Intelligible Truths beyond the Veil.

2dly, [*What is reveal'd in Religion, as it is most useful and necessary, so it must and may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, or the like.*] We certainly agree, That God hath only reveal'd as much as is necessary or useful;

ful; and, in matters of pure Revelation, no more than will give us an Idea of the Thing, or what it is God proposes to our Belief; and therefore make this an Argument, that there are Things that belong to it, of which we cannot form a distinct Idea, and, consequently, from hence give it the Denomination of being *Mysterious*.

Now, as for the *mysterious* part of any reveal'd Truth, we affirm, That it exceeds our Comprehension, otherwise the *Mystery* must cease: But, as it exceeds our Comprehension, so we say, it is not necessary to be comprehended; much less do we allow, that it may be comprehended by common Ideas or Notions, or scann'd by these Ideas: So as that, in case it doth not correspond with 'em, we cannot call in question the Truth of what is reveal'd and comprehended.

No, here, in case Curiosity tempts us to dive into the mysterious part of any reveal'd Truth, and upon the closest Researches, we find ourselves unable to comprehend; 'We are to adhere to the Substance of the Truth,

' Truth, where we cannot comprehend the *Modus* of it ; or, in other ' Terms, adore, where we cannot ' comprehend. But as to our comprehending by common Notions, or, as easily as we can comprehend, Wood, or Stone, or the like, I observe,

1st, This Gentleman makes all Objects of Humane Knowledge equally comprehensible. And,

2dly, That we may take our Measures for comprehending any one, by those Idea's we have formed of others ; but I have elsewhere sufficiently discovered the Falseness of both these Assertions ; and there I shall not enlarge, but rest upon the Conclusiveness of what hath been offered.

3dly, *When we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines as what is known of Natural Things (which I pretend we*

*can) we may then be as* \* properly said  
12. Sect. 3. *to comprehend the one as the other.*

This is a very bold Undertaking, and not to be believed 'till he gives us good Reason, and nothing less than Matter of Fact for Demonstration, especially

especially if he intends that part of those Doctrines we justly call *mysterious*. But then, in using this Familiarity, ' We must engage him not ' to explain away the Substance of ' any Doctrine, nor to reject the Doctrine, if he fails in his Explication.

And now we come to attack him in his Strong-hold, that is, his Appeal to the Voice of Scripture. : \* And

truly Scripture is an unquestionable \* See Cap. 3. Sect. 3. Tribunal for the Decision of all Controversies in Matters of Revelation ; and as to their present Controversies, as far as Scripture can determine, every one may desire to put the Case on this Issue, and Appeal to this Tribunal (as well as he) provided he is satisfied Scripture is on his side ; and he may with greater satisfaction be reputed Orthodox with this on his side, than to pass for Orthodox with the whole World, and have it against him. But then in case he either mistakes the Sence of Scripture, or has recourse to it, to make it come up to the State of his Case, and prove more than what can be inferr'd from it ; it's very bold to say, that Scripture

pture has engaged him in this *Error*, if it be one: Here I'm sure Scripture will be no Protection to him, against a just *Charge of Error*, because he makes an Appeal to her, and retreats under her Wing for Shelter; when in reality he charges his own false Reasonings, or the Arguments of some particular Passions, not to say unjust Propositions, on Scripture, as if all were the unerring Counsels and Dictates of *Divine Truth*. And truly this Reasoner does little less, when he attempts to prove, that there are no *Mysteries in Christianity*, because he endeavours to shew, that the word *Mystery* in the *New Testament*, is no where applied to the *Thing* we contend for, *viz.* a *Thing* that with respect to *Humane Reason*, contains something in it altogether *incomprehensible*: For is it not absurd to argue against a *Thing* from the signification of a Word, which might never have been used in Scripture, and yet the *Thing* found there? and tho' it is used, yet our Author, pursuant to the *Mind of Scripture*, fixes Three several *Significations* on it, and

and consequently it can be no Argument that it hath not a Fourth; because it does not appear in Scripture; unless he could prove that the *Holy Ghost* thought it necessary to reveal all the Notions or Acceptations of the word *Mystery*; therefore if this Advocate for Reason allows the whole Case, as he pretends, to be put upon this Issue, it will presently be given against him, for want of a good Consequence. So that in truth, if the Controversie is to be determined by Scripture, (as no doubt it ought) it must unavoidably turn upon this issue, 'Whether there are not Truths set forth in Scripture, in which, if we enquire into the Nature of 'em, a great deal is contain'd in 'em, which we cannot comprehend, and consequently are *mysterious*, and *above Reason*; whether Scripture deliver 'em under these Denominations or no.

This may be true, tho' the Word *Mystery* were no where to be found in Scripture, or tho' Scripture had not so much as hinted, that there were any thing *mysterious* or *incompre-*  
pre-

prehensible. If this can be proved, our Adversary must acknowledge, that there are Mysteries in Christianity still. The Instances of our Saviour's Incarnation already produced, move upon this Supposition; and I shall be ready to prove it, whenever he shall think fit to impugn the Truth of it. But besides this, I shall in some measure condescend to his own Method, and tho' I shall not Examine every Passage of Scripture, to see whether he has rightly stated the Signification of the Word, yet I do not question, but we may offer as strong Arguments to apply it sometimes to the Sense we contend for, as he hath done for another; and besides this, I hope to produce some Passages of Scripture, that assure us there are still those things in Christianity, we properly call *Mysteries*; and if this be performed, I hope it may without Affectation be said, that his Appeal to the Tribunal of Scripture is defeated.

And, 1<sup>st</sup>, because I do not design Opposition, or Disputes, for Opposition's sake; I shall own that the  
Word

Word MYSTERY is used in the several Sences he hath put upon it.

I. For the Gospel in general.

II. For some unfolded Secrets.

And,

III. For things veil'd by Parables: but this is by no means an Argument that there is no other signification to be found in Scripture: for I am perswaded, I can prove the contrary with as much Authority and Force of Reason as he can produce against it; I mean, that it's sometimes used to express the Incomprehensibleness of certain Truths, tho' reveal'd. And,

1. That *Mystery* must imply something that is in the Nature of it to us incomprehensible, St. Paul seems to have assured us, *But we speak the Wisdom of God, in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 7. All sides agree, that the Apostle points at the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith, and particularly the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ, and more primarily the most abstruse part of it, his Incarnation.

2. It's visible the Apostle speaks of it as a *Mystery*, even when he reveals  
G reveals

veals it; for he reveals the Wisdom of God in a *Mystery*. He now speaks to the Perfect, that had own'd the Gospel, and the Divine Authority of his Preaching, as appears from the preceding Verse; and it's their peculiar to have the Meat of the Word, or the *Mysteries* of the Kingdom of GOD, communicated to 'em; and therefore, tho' this Wisdom of GOD be a *Mystery*, and consequently he delivers it as such, yet the Perfect believe, when they cannot comprehend, because it is the Wisdom of GOD: I am sure this Notion is agreeable to the Judgment of *Clemens Alexandrinus*; for he uses the very Word of the Apostle, and calls it, *τὴν ἐν μυστηρίῳ καλυμμένην σοφίαν, ἐν ἐκείνῳ δὲ οὐδὲ τὰ Θεοῦ*; nay, he makes this an Argument, why the Fundamental Truths of the Gospel should only be communicated to the Pure and Perfect, *ἐπιμύστερον ἐν τῇ ἐν μυστηρίῳ, &c. ut supra, Strom. Lib. 1.* And therefore since the Apostle reveals it in a *Mystery*, it must be so, because it contains something in it that is incomprehensible. Hence we may justly Vindicate our

English

*English Translation*, which does not joyn, *τὴν ἀποκαλυμμένην τὸ ἐν μυστηρίῳ*, as our *Adversary* would have it; but makes it a Repetition, or Enlargement upon the *Divine Wisdom*, viz, even the *Hidden Wisdom*. It's true, our *Adversary* endeavours to evade this Exposition, because we are told in the 10th Verse, *But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit*: But the Words manifestly referr to those Things, which, in the preceding Verse, God is said to have prepared for them that love him, which are chiefly the Benefits of our Redemption, and the Consequent of this fundamental Revelation; or at least, if it must be this fundamental Instance of Divine Wisdom, it is only reveal'd so as to let us know, what God intends by it, and assures us of the Truth of it, but not to comprehend the whole Nature of it; or in a word, it is so reveal'd, as any other thing is reveal'd in a *Mystery*; that is, when something remains in it, that is not to be comprehended; so that, in Truth, here's *Mystery* in two Sences:

G 2

1st,

1st, With respect to the Incomprehensibleness of the Thing. And,  
2dly, With respect to the Thing before it was communicated to us.

And thus far not only the Natural Construction of the Words, but the Authority of a Learned Expositor carries us, *Vid. Theophilact. in locum*,  
 Μυστήριον καλεῖ, τὸ κατὰ τὴν Χριστὸν κήρυγμα, εἰς ὃ καὶ κήρυγμα ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μυστήριον ἔστιν, καθὼς ἔδδ' Ἀγγελοι ᾔδεσαν αὐτὸ πρὶν γενέσθαι, καὶ καθὼς ἄλλοι βλήπουσι, ἄλλο νοῶμεν.

But Secondly, I shall insist on that noble Passage of St. Paul to Timothy, *Ep. 1. Cap. 3. Ver. 10.* 'And without Controversie, great is the Mystery of Godliness; God was manifested in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory. It's observable, our Adversary expounds as accurately, as he reasons; for he produces this for his eighth Passage, where *Mystery* is put for the Gospel in general, whereas it's manifest the Words cannot, without the greatest Violence, be applied to any thing but a *Divine Person*, represented under

der certain Divine Characters, and indeed to none but our Saviour, the Corner-Stone of the Gospel, but not the Gospel; for truly the Apostle seems, in this place, to have given a description of his whole Mediation. I am sure the Current of the Fathers, as well as of after Commentators, apply it to none but our Saviour. But now since our Saviour's Incarnation is this *Mystery* of Godliness, it's evident the Apostle does not speak of what it was before it was reveal'd, but what it is after it is preach'd and believed on in the World, and therefore he calls it a *Mystery*, not because it was so before it was reveal'd, but because it still remains so; and thereupon he endeavours to represent it as such, by enlarging upon the Nature and Incomprehensibleness of it; God was manifest in Flesh, the Foundation of this *Mystery*, the following Characters being only their Appendages that take their rise and center in it. This is an Exposition that discovers itself so clearly, that we find our Adversary industriously huddling up this

Passage, as it were, in a *Mystery*, without giving any tolerable account of it; and at last is forced to confess, That the gracious Manifestation of Christ and his Gospel, is to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing, *N. 30.* So that we plainly read *Mystery* in the very Sense we contend for: I am sure we have the Opinion of some Ancient Church-Writers to ratifie it. Of this Opinion we find *Athanasius* in his Tract against *Paulus Samosatenus de Incarnatione Verbi*, where he gives his Judgment, ἐκ *Cathedra*, as Archbishop of *Alexandria*; for first he lays open the Attempts of this Heretick, in endeavouring to Subvert the Doctrine of our Saviour's Incarnation, and files it, Μέγα μυστήριον [τὸ μέγα μυστήριον ἀναστρέψεν;] and to prove it such, cites this very place of our Apostle. Secondly, He represents the danger in attempting to unfold such profound Difficulties, that are only with safety to us believed, and in a word, enjoins us to adhere to the *Apostolick Faith*, without admitting new *Terms* or *Notions*, Τὴν παρεδδομένην πίσιν φυλάττειν, ἐκτρέψαι δὲ πᾶς βεβήλους καινονομίας, and above all,

εὐσεβεῖν

φοβεῖσθαι τὴν περὶ τοῦ τελικέως μυστηρίου ζήτησιν, to dread the Disquisition of such a *Mystery*. But besides the Opinion of this great Man, we have the Comment of *Isidore the Pelusiote*, and *Theophilact*, fixing the *Mystery* of *Godliness* in the *Incomprehensibleness* of it. Thus the former, *Lib. 2. Ep. 192.* ὥς ἀγνοούμενον παντὶ πᾶσι, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἰδέναι ἀρεσκόντων, παντὸς γὰρ ἐπέκριναν λόγῳ καὶ ὃ κατέσκεπεν, and pursuant to this, expostulates, Who can comprehend the Miracle of his Conception, transacted without Coition, or imagine how the Divine Nature can be circumscrib'd, that is Immenſe, and not to be circumscrib'd? And *Theophilact* proceeds in the same Strain thus, Ἀλλὰς τε τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ ᾧ ὁ εὐσεβεὶς ἐσσεύετο πάντες ἴσουσιν, τὸ δὲ πῶς ἀποτέκρυπται διὰ τοῦτο μυστήριον ἐστίν, in *Locum*. And now this is something more certainly than calling it a *Mystery*, with respect to the Ages preceding the Gospel; for I think this Passage in itself admits of the Exposition before us more naturally, than that our Adversary contends for; besides we have the Authority of the Learned in past Ages. And

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since

since I have made it appear he has no advantage over us in his whole Hypothesis, I know not why we may not in his own Language pronounce against him, that *Mystery* in the New Testament, is sometimes put for a thing inconceivable in itself, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions, however reveal'd. This likewise calls to mind the Triumphs of our Adversary upon a Passage, which as we allow, stiles the Gospel a *Mystery*, under this Notion; it's *Rom. 16. 25.* — *But is now made manifest*, whereupon he Expostulates, In what sence could this Secret be made manifest, if it remain'd still Incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed, to bless the World with a parcel of Unintelligible Notions. I confess, I incline to the former sence, I mean a *Mystery*, with respect to the Ages preceding the Gospel, but can see no foundation for Absurdities, no more than for his vain Triumphs, if we take it in the Sence he pretends to explode; for this Reasoner, had he not been too much us'd to confound things together,

gether, might have learn'd, that the highest *Mystery* is not wholly unintelligible; and it may be properly said, to be manifested in as much as God has communicated by the Apostle's preaching what's useful and necessary, and as much as will inform us what God proposes to our Belief: 'Again it's *manifested*, and that too 'to our unspeakable Comfort, since 'the vast Designs of Divine Love, 'and the unexpressible Benefits to 'us-ward in it, are abundantly laid 'open; and I think these are Favours or Blessings too rich to be exposed in Ridicule or Burlesque.

But further, If the use of the Word in Scripture will not prove the thing we contend for, there are sufficient hints in Scripture to prove it; I shall first insist on *St. Paul's* Accounting the preaching of Christ unto the *Greeks foolishness*; but unto them which are called, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, *1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.*

Now this place is generally interpreted of the Incarnation of Christ, or the Union of the two Natures in-  
to

to one Divine Person: And those that embrace and believe it, must resolve it into the Infinite Power and Wisdom of God, not as a common, but special Act, and consequently a thing incomprehensible as they are; and on this account, it's to the *Greeks*, the great Masters of Reason, Foolishness; because, as it is represented to us, it contains in it, Things that can never be reconciled with common Notions, or Ideas. What common Ideas can satisfy us, that the Son of God should speak by a Man, or as the Sacred Canon hath it, in the form of a Man; that God should have a Son, and that he should suffer as the Son of God? What common Ideas can represent to us, that Christ could have a Being before the Worlds, as God; that he should be born a Man, and exist as such, and yet not as a Man, begotten of a Man? These things, the most improved Notices of Natural Reason cannot confirm, or warrant, no not our Adversary with all his Reason. If any thing, it's the *Arian*, or *Socinian* Hypothesis (tho' advanced contrary to

to the Current of Scripture) that may pretend most to be a Rationale in this matter. And yet our Adversary seems to explode this as much as that of the *Trinitarians*, because they are forced to allow Divine Worship to be paid him, [*Cap. 1. Sect. 2. N. 2. I am mistaken if either they, or the Arians can make their Notions of a dignified, and Creature-God, capable of Divine Worship, appear more reasonable, than the Extravagancies of other Sects, touching the Article of the Trinity.*] But to return, It's manifest here we learn how the Doctrines of Christianity came to be branded with the Imputation of Foolishness, viz. *Because they will not comport with common Notices, or the received Principles of Natural Philosophy*: for I have evinced it, upon the Objection of *Trypho* against *Justin*, and *St. Clement's* Comment on the place, Ἰδὲ γὰρ λέγειν σὲ πρὸς παρχειν Θεὸν ὄντα πρὸς αἰσῶ-  
ραν τέτον ἢ χειρόν εἶτα καὶ γεννηθῆναι, ἀνθρώπου γε-  
νόμενον, ὑπαρμέναι, καὶ ἔτι ἐκ ἀνθρώπου ἔξ ἀν-  
θρώπου, ὃ μόνον παράδοξον δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ  
μωρόν. *Dial. cum Trypho*, p. 269.

And

And St. *Clement*, in *locum*, thus, *Lib. 1. Stromat.* "Ελληνισ δὲ μωρίαν μυθῶ-  
 δες ἡγνύνται οἱ δοκασίσοροι διὰ τε ἀνθρώπων ἰδὼν  
 Θεῶ λαλεῖν, ἰδὼν τε ἔχεν τὸ Θεὸν, καὶ δὲ καὶ πεποι-  
 θῆναι τῶτον. Here we see this great  
 Man does not charge the *Greeks* with  
 false Principles of Philosophy, as the  
 Ground of their Error, for he re-  
 presents the Thing as much inconsis-  
 tent with such *principles* as they could,  
 and makes this the Foundation of  
 their unjust Charge, I mean in pro-  
 nouncing the Doctrines of Christiani-  
 ty Foolishness; and indeed he calls  
 'em *δοκασίσοροι*, but it can be on no o-  
 ther account, than because they  
 would admit of nothing but *Natural*  
*Reason*, and *Philosophy*, and there-  
 upon would try all revealed Truths  
 by common Notions, or Principles of  
 Philosophy, and reject 'em as absurd  
 and foolish, because they could not  
 make these deep Things of God to  
 comport with common Ideas of Ob-  
 jects of Sense. Indeed *Celsus* ob-  
 jects much the same things against  
*Origen*; for upon every turn, he en-  
 deavours to ridicule the *Divinity* of  
*our Saviour*, by representing it incon-

sistent

sistent with the Principles of *Natural*  
*Reason*: And now give me leave to  
 make one single Remark, since it  
 occurs so naturally: Are not these  
 the very Principles which our Advo-  
 cate for *Reason* moves upon? So that  
 an unprejudiced Person might su-  
 spect that I'm dealing with a *Celsus*,  
 or a *Trypho*; or that they were risen  
 from the Dead. But to conclude  
 this Argument, it's manifest St. *Cle-*  
*ments* must believe, That the Funda-  
 mental Doctrine of the *Christian Re-*  
*ligion*, still contains in it something  
 that cannot be comprehended by  
*Natural Reason*, that cannot be re-  
 conciled to common Ideas, or Prin-  
 ciples of Natural Philosophy, and  
 consequently something that's *My-*  
*sterious and above Reason*: And there-  
 fore if this Reverend Father is not  
 mistaken in the purport of the *Holy*  
*Ghost* (as we have good Reason to  
 conclude, he is not) the *New Testa-*  
*ment* does contain the Thing (if not  
 the Word) we contend for, I mean,  
 proposes to our Belief, Things that  
 are Incomprehensible, or above the  
 Comprehension of Human Reason.

The

The last Argument I shall produce, is two or three Passages of Scripture, which (because they bear an Affinity to one another) I shall examine and conclude them under one Argument.

I begin with St. Paul's account of Humane Knowledge, even under this last State of Revelation; for he includes himself, and the whole College of *Apostles*, who undoubtedly enjoyed the *Special Assistance of the Spirit of God*; nay, St. Paul had been *caught up into the Third Heaven*, where he was almost *overwhelm'd with abundance of Revelations*, 2 Cor. 12. And yet he tells us, *We know but in part, and we Propheſie in part*, 1 Cor. Cap. 13. ver. 9. and the Reason assigned is, *We ſee through a Glaſs darkly*, ver. 12. ſo that the Impediment ſeems to lie upon the Mind, or the Immenſeneſs of the Object, not in God that denies us a competent Revelation; for this is the laſt Revelation of himſelf; and therefore this Glaſs argues an Imperfection, or Inability in comprehending ſome of thoſe Truths that are revealed; but if

if this Glaſs be a Veil which God caſts before our Eyes, like that upon the *Jews*, in as much as he does not impart in this Life a clear Diſcovery of certain *Gospel-Truths*, then, according to the Mind of our Author, there are ſtill *Myſteries* in the Gospel, in the higheſt Sence; but truly St. *Clement* fixes it upon the Imperfections of Humane Knowledge, ſince he repreſents the Mind in this Earthly Tabernacle, as viewing Things through Sences after a groſs corporeal manner, whereas in another World our Knowledge will be highly enlarged, for then it will be Face to Face; or, as he expreſſes it, κατὰ μὲν τὰς αἰσθητικὰς τῶν ἀρεσκουσῶν, καὶ ἀσώματους τῆς διανοίας ὁμιλοῦνται: That is, by a pure and naked Application of the Mind, or Intuition.

Again, it's manifeſt the Object of this Imperfect Knowledge, is the deep things of God, or, in plain terms, the fundamental Revelations of the Gospel; for, the Apoſtle muſt at leaſt comprehend, if not principally intend them, when he tells us, *And we Propheſie but in part*; that is, thoſe Truths we

we publish to the World are only reveal'd in part, since we can only pretend to know or comprehend them in part. And truly St. Clement asserts as much of St. Paul himself, notwithstanding his abundance of Revelations, for thus, on his words 2 Cor. xii. 4. (where, no doubt, he receiv'd the chiefest Instructions of his Apostolick Office) *He was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for Man to utter*; he observes, that there was no Law nor Precept given that oblig'd him to stifle any of those Christian Truths God had committed to him; so that in saying, *it is not lawful*, he intended to represent the Ineffability of the Divine Nature, or the things of GOD; τὰ Ἀρρήτων καὶ Θεῶν ἀνυσχόμενα, or, δύναμις δὲ ἀγία ἀφθεγγίου ἔστι καὶ Θεὸν μνησάτω. And, to confirm this Notion, he cites three Passages that represent the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, Rom. xi. 33. *Oh! the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! And again, But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery: [That is, even when we speak*

*speak it, else it proves nothing in this place,]* 1 Cor. ii. 7. And lastly, Colos. ii. Ver. 23. To the Acknowledgment of the *Mystery of God in Christ*, [*as you have it in the Ancient Readings*] in whom are hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom, or Knowledge. This is a very remarkable Passage, and therefore I must beg leave to enlarge upon it.

As for the Sence of St. Clement, it's visible he looks upon it to be a *Mystery*, tho' reveal'd and acknowledg'd, and to be a *Mystery* because it contains something in it which is Ἀρρήτων ἀφθεγγίου, or ἀπόκρυπτων; for otherwise it can be no Argument to prove what he had just before asserted. Indeed, our Adversary thinks he has evaded the Force of this Exposition, by telling us, (without any tolerable Proof) That *the Words are to be understood of the Gospel of CHRIST*; but if it be the Gospel of CHRIST, it may be stiled a MYSTERY, in respect of its Fundamental Truths, inasmuch as they contain in 'em something that's hidden or mysterious; for thus much the following Verse apparently hints,

ἐν ᾧ, [i. e. in which, if this Exposition obtains] *are hidden* ὑποκρυπτοί: It's manifest the Apostle speaks of it as *reveal'd*, nay, as it is when acknowledg'd and embrac'd, and yet there is something *hidden* or *mysterious*. Thus we may conclude, against our Reasoner, that *Mystery* may be put for the *Gospel*, and yet call'd so, because it contains certain Truths, whose Nature cannot be fully comprehended, or certain Truths, that contain something in 'em that to us is incomprehensible. But yet, for all his majestic decisive way of expounding Scripture, I think the words more naturally point at the *Mystery* of our Redemption, in the Incarnation of the Son of GOD, especially if we add hereto the ancient Reading used by these Fathers, St. *Austin*, and St. *Ambrose*, to the Acknowledgment of the *Mystery* [not Knowledge of *Mystery*, as this vain Disputer of this World would have it] of GOD in CHRIST, for, 1<sup>st</sup>, ἐν ᾧ, which immediately follows, must more naturally be apply'd to *Christ*, not to *Mystery*, agreeable to our Translation, *In whom all*  
the

the *Treasures*, &c. This is agreeable to the Sentiments of *Origen*, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν — ἡτοι οἱ θησαυροὶ ἐν χριστῷ ἔσθιν, In *Hierom.* *Hom.* 8. pag. 99. 2<sup>dly</sup>, If the Gospel of *Christ*, and not *Christ* himself, was intended, it would be improper to say, that the *Treasures* of Wisdom are hid in it, being a reveal'd Institution: Therefore we may justly conclude, pursuant to the Mind of St. *Clement*, That the Incarnation of our Redeemer (the Foundation of our *Redemption*, and Fountain whence all the *Treasures* of Wisdom and Knowledge derive) is the *Mystery* of GOD in *Christ*, which is to be acknowledg'd, not unravel'd or fully comprehended; for, since it is expressly propos'd as a *Mystery*, and remains one when embrac'd or acknowledg'd, it must be so, because it carries in it something that is hidden or incomprehensible.

Indeed *Origen* manifestly joyns in this Notion; for, in his Comment on *Matt.* xiii. 44. he makes the *Field* to be the *Holy Scriptures*, that set forth all the Means of Salvation with the greatest clearness; but the *Trea-*

sure to be CHRIST, because in Him all the Depths of Wisdom are hid, in Him, in a Mystery, citing this very Passage of St. Paul, by way of Proof, *Τὰ ἀποκρυμμένα καὶ κρυπόμενα τοῖς φανεροῖς* [differtis verbis] - νοήματα τῆς σοφίας ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκρυμμένης καὶ τῷ Χρῆσθ.

And now give me leave to make an Appeal, as he does, [to all Equitable Persons, N. 35.] Whether, by as good Reason and Authority, it does not appear, That not only the Sence of the Word, but the Things we contend for, are recorded in Scripture, as any he has produc'd to the contrary? So that, in truth, we are ready to [render up ourselves] to the Voice of Scripture, as well as submit the Merits of the Cause to it, without being influenc'd and carried away by such weak Practisings as he has set forth, in a Dialogue that would merit some Stripes, if perform'd by a School-boy, rather than Applause, as 'tis the Product of a pretending Master of Reason. See Sect. 36.

And now I have done with his Scripture-authorities, but cannot pass by one Remark of his, which I find to

to be the chief Improvement that graces his Second Edition: [*Nor is it undeserving our particular Notice, that Mystery is here made the distinguishing Mark of the False and Antichristian Church; (See Rev. xvii. 5.) And no doubt but as far as any Church allows of Mysteries, so far it is Antichristian, and may, with a great deal of Justice, tho' little Honour, claim Kindred with the Scarlet Whore.*] Here is a very bold Stricture, and yet a Man with half an Eye may discern, that his Observation is as irrational and ridiculous as his Inference; for *Mystery*, in this place, I suppose, would not have pass'd for a distinguishing Mark, had not her Doctrines and Practices merited the other part of the Title, viz. *The Mother of Harlots, and Abomination of the Earth; had she not held a golden Cup in her Hand, full of Abominations and Filthiness of her Fornication, Ver. 4. and been drunken with the Blood of the Saints, and with the Blood of the Martyrs of Jesus.* But as for his Inference, had he consulted St. Paul's Second Epistle to the *Thessalonians* a little

better, he might have learn'd, that there's a *Mystery of Iniquity* as well as *Godliness*; but perhaps he was unwilling to be disappointed of a malicious, tho' illogical, Suggestion; he might there have inform'd himself, That it was always the Devil's Business to imitate the *True Religion* by mighty Signs and lying Wonders, if it were possible, to deceive the very Elect; nay, that *Antichrist* sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God, and consequently he must pretend to *Mystery* with a witness: So that, upon the whole, this Gentleman may as well assign the Devil's Miracles for a distinguishing Mark of Antichrist, and prove the true Religion to be nearly related to Antichrist, the Scarlet Whore, and the Devil, because she proceeds upon the Authority of Miracles: Nay, rather we may upon his Argument affirm, That Miracles are a distinguishing Mark of the true Religion: And since *Antichrist* and the *Devil* pretend to *Miracles*, the Religion they pretend to must be true too. Whereas we know *these* to be Divine

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and Authoritative, *those* Diabolical and Usurped, so we pronounce *this* the *Mystery of Iniquity*, that the *Mystery of Godliness*.

The next thing that offers itself, is, the Suffrage of the Primitive Church. It's true, there are a great many things intervene, wherein he labours more to give us a Specimen of his Wit, than Reason: But truly, I think, they are both of a piece, for I can discover nothing that deserves a single Reflection, much less a formal Reply. I proceed therefore to the Suffrage of the Fathers, to whom he makes an Appeal. He tells us indeed, [*It is not out of any deference to their Judgments*, N. 40.] and therefore we must conclude he submits to it, because he's perswaded they pre-emptorily declare for his Opinion; but I hope to prove the contrary: For tho' he confesses he has bestow'd a great deal of Pains upon 'em, yet this is so far from discouraging us from entering the List, that I hope to make it appear, that his Pains are either an Effect of his Ignorance in these Authors, or of his Dishonesty

in suppressing their Opinions. And, first, all that he proves out of the Fathers is, That they have asserted other Notions of *Mystery* than what we contend for; whereas he himself assigns four or five different Notions; and if Classick Authors were consulted, we could produce some more: and therefore he might as well reject one of his own Notions, because the Fathers have not mention'd it. But I find this Author, upon every turn, shamefully betrays his Reason, for he knows not what is incumbent upon him to prove, and therefore we need not wonder if he proves not his main Design: I'm sure he's now to prove a Negative, (or that which amounts to it) if he proves any thing, *viz.* That the Fathers, he cites, no where apply the word MYSTERY to things beyond Humane Comprehension; or, that those Notions of the word *Mystery*, which he finds recorded, are deliver'd exclusively of all others; for, if he has neither cited all their Notions or Acceptations of the word, nor prov'd, that they are exclusive of all others, he proves nothing

thing against the acceptation of the word we now contend for; and if so, the most cursory Reader will presently pronounce, That he must give up the Cause, in case he fixes it on this Issue, I mean the Authority of Fathers. But because I will take no advantage of his weakness, I will go along with him in his own Instances. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, What he cites from *Clemens Alexand.* concludes nothing; for, I know no Christian that denys the Christian Religion to be [*an Illumination, because it brought hidden things to light, and that with respect to the Mosaick Veil.*] But this only proves one of his own Notions, that is indeed allow'd by us. But to be short with him; Whereas he has the Face to tell us, That *several of those Texts of Scripture alledg'd by him, are by this Father expounded on his side, and consequently against our Notion*: I shall appeal to what has been already cited from him, to prove the quite contrary \*. Indeed I could add a great \* See p. 46, 48. deal more to discover his Judgment of the Inconceivableness of certain Ob-

Objects of Faith, or Matters of Revelation; and, because I'm engag'd, I shall produce a few Instances: And, first, where he stiles Christianity an *Illumination*, he speaks of the *Fulness of Christ*, as a *Mystery* reveal'd indeed, but the Nature of it known to a very few; and he proves it from the Incomprehensible Nature of GOD, *Strom. lib. 5.* ὁ ἵψος πάντων φωνῶν, καὶ πάν νοήμα, καὶ πάντων ἐννοειῶν, ὃ δὲν ποτε ῥεῖσθῃ παρὰ δόξῃ, ἀρρήστῳ ὧν δύναμις ἰσχύς, and yet more fully on *Moses's* words, *Exod. 33. ver. 18. Shew me thy Glory;* Μη εἶδὲ δόξαν σου πρὸς ἀνθρώπων, μηδὲ ῥῖπδον τὸ Θεόν, ἀλλ' ἢ μόνη τῇ παρ' αὐτοῦ δύναμις γνωστῇ. 2. p. 365. *Strom. lib.* That is, by the *Effects of his Power*. Again, on *St. Paul's* words, *1 Cor. 5. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;* *Strom. lib. 5.* he observes, Ἀποθνήσκει ὡς Ἀγνῶστὸς θύμα ὑδὲ Θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀναζόμενος. Here it's evident he argues from the Incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, and consequently must fix the *Mystery* on this Bottom, as well as the want of *Revelation*. Indeed, we may justly argue *à majori*, from the Sence of this Father, if the Nature

ture of the Godhead be, in the Opinion of this great Man, so highly incomprehensible, how much more must the Fundamental Article of the Christian Religion be so, that consists of the Union of the Divine with Human Nature, and consequently, in a proper sence, *mysterious*. See *N. 42.*

Thus much for *St. Clement*; the next Authority is *Justin Martyr*, which concludes nothing to his purpose: For, First, he only uses the Word in a loose Sence, and not exclusive of any other signification; and if this may be an Argument against that Sence which this Reasoner declaims against, it will be so against others, which he has expressly assigned. This may serve for a sufficient Return to the next Paragraph, where *Tertullian* stiles all *Religious Rites*, or *Acts of Worship*, *Mysteries*; which among the Heathens were generally kept secret: yet, tho' this be an allowed Sence of the Word, it can be no Argument, but that *Mystery*, even in *Tertullian's* time, was apply'd to Things in themselves abstruse or incomprehensible. Of the same

same stamp are his Arguments from *Origen*, which prove no more than what all sides own, *viz.* that *Mystery*, in a vulgar, or more loose Sence, is put for *Symbols*, *Types*, or any *abstruse* or *sacred Matter*. 'N. 44.

Certainly, had this *Gentleman* consulted any other *Pieces* of this *Learned Father*, he might have inform'd himself, that he uses *Mystery* even in *Divine Matters*, for Things that are to us incomprehensible. Thus, in the forecited Passage, speaking of the Thing as it now is, he expresses himself, *Ἀποκεκρυμμένα νοήματα τῆς σοφίας ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἀποκεκρυμμένης καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.* [*Ut Supra.* See pag. 46.]

Again, on the Words of our Saviour, *Mat.* xix. 24, 26. he observes, That *GOD* was able to make a *Camel* pass thro' an *Eye of a Needle*; and yet no one but God or Christ, or he to whom he shall reveal it, is able to comprehend it, *πὼς ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιῶσι ὁ θεὸς δυνατὰ, αὐτοὺς ἂν εἶδεν, καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὃ μὲν ἀποκαλύψῃ ὁ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.* Afterwards he challenges any Man to Illustrate or Explain such *Mysteries*; being Things only comprehended

hended, as well as performed, by *GOD*, *Ἐι δὲ ἐμφαίνει τὰ ὅσα καὶ ποιῶσι τελειώματα μυστήρια, καὶ ἐπὶ τέλει τὸ ἔργον διὰ πνεύματος ὁδῶν θεοῦ μόνον δυνατὸν, ἢ μή, ὁ δυνατὸς ἐξέταξις.* Pag. 382. 1 Vol.

But now in the close of this Paragraph, he thinks he sufficiently explodes our Notion of *Mystery*, when he tells us *Origen* [*was far from thinking any Doctrine of our Religion a Mystery, in the present Sence of the Word, that he expressly affirms them to agree all with common Notions, and to commend themselves to the Assent of every well-dispos'd Hearer.*] This truly looks very plausible; but I'm perswaded, *Origen*, in making good this Assertion, will run counter to the Notions of this *Indefatigable Reasoner*: For First, It's well known, who the Holy Father was engaged with, a Learned Heathen, who had formed an Objection, That the Christians were to believe Things, tho' in themselves never so absurd or ridiculous; and therefore it was his business to take off the Objection, by shadowing forth the Reasonableness of every Doctrine: He begins with

with the Doctrines of Natural Religion, the Being of a God, and our Love towards him; but when he comes to the *Mystery* of our *Saviour's Incarnation*, he makes a stand, and repeats *Celsus's* Objection, *viz.* *ἐπὶ ἐκ θνητῆς σώματος ὅσα δὲ νομίζομεν, καὶ ἐν τῷ τῷ σώματι δὲ ἔχον δυνάμει.* The Answer is remarkable; for it evinces the Divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour, as a standing Doctrine of the Christian Church, to the Eternal Confusion of all *Socinian* Pretences to Antiquity. Let our *Accusers* know, that we (as it were speaking the Sence of the Christian Church) do not only think, but are fully persuaded, that he is Originally, or in the Beginning GOD, and the Son of GOD; nay, he is the Substantial Word, Wisdom, and Truth; and as for his Mortal Body, and Human Soul, we attribute the greatest Things to it; in as much as a most exact and compleat Union with his Divinity, it obtains a kind of Divinity; so that we may still treat our Blessed Saviour, GOD and Man, (as GOD) with the highest Acts of Divine Worship.

Worship. His words are these:

Ἰσχυρὸν οἱ ἐγκατενόητες εἰσι ὃν μὲν νομίζομεν καὶ πεποισμεθα ἀρχὴν εἶναι Θεόν, καὶ ὃν Θεόν, ἔτι δὲ αὐτόλογον καὶ ἡ ἀποσοφία, καὶ ἡ ἀπαλήθεια, τὸ δὲ θνητὸν αὐτῶν σῶμα; καὶ τὴν ἀνθρώπινον ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχὴν τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνον μόνον κοινωνίᾳ, ἀλλὰ ἐνώσει καὶ ἀνακράσει, τὰ μέγιστα φόμεν περισηληφέναι, καὶ πρὸς ἐκείνου θεότησιν κοινωνησύντα, εἰς ὃν μάλιστα ἐκτελέσκειν.

You see the great Design of the Apologist is to represent how such Honour and Dignity is derived upon the Humanity of our Saviour, and consequently the Reasonableness of paying Divine Worship to him even as GOD-Man, or GOD Incarnate; and pursuant to this, to justify those Honours that accrew to the Body of our Saviour, he appeals to the Natural Transmutations of Matter, whereby Bodies are often highly refin'd and improv'd, and then ingeniously concludes, *Why should not the Infinite Power of GOD therefore be able to change the Mortal Body of Jesus?* *ἢ αὐθένειον καὶ δέαν ποιότητα.*

Thus we see how, out of Ignorance, or a worse Principle, the Disputer of this World (for the Title belongs to him, tho' not so deservedly

ly as those on whom St. Paul bestows it) has Misrepresented the Sence of this great Man, whose main Design was, to shew the Reasonableness of paying Divine Worship to the Blessed Jesus; and this he sufficiently perform'd, by asserting his Divinity, but he did not attempt to demonstrate the *Modus* of the Union of the two Natures by common Notions. He has indeed expressly asserted our Saviour's Divinity, as well as Humanity, in the highest Notion of it; and I defie this profound Reasoner to state the Union of both Natures by common Ideas or Notions, much less to give us as familiar an Idea of it as we have of Wood or Stone. Till he has done this, he trifles, and we shall still believe that our Saviour's Incarnation is thus far a *Mystery*. Thus we have turn'd those very Fathers he most relies on against him; and tho' he has the Confidence to fix a peremptory Challenge upon the Writings of the three first Centuries, I could produce as much more, had I not a regard to my own Time, and that of the Reader's, which ought

to be a sufficient Consideration with every Man, to prevent him from engaging in Impertinences, or dwelling too long where Necessity does not require it: I shall therefore only beg Leave to add the Judgment of *Irenæus*, — *Si autem omnium quæ in Scripturis requirantur absolutiones non possumus invenire, — credere autem hæc talia debemus Deo, qui & nos fecit; rectissime scientes, quia Scripturæ quidem perfectæ sunt, quippe à verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus dictæ: Nos autem secundum quod minores sumus & novissimi à verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus, scientiâ mysteriorum ejus indigemus; & non mirum est, si in spiritualibus cælestibus, & in his quæ habent Revelari hoc patimur nos, quandoquidem eorum quæ ante pedes sunt — quæ & conteruntur à nobis, & videntur & sunt nobiscum, multa fugerunt nostram scientiam, & Deo hac ipsa committimus; — Si ergo & in rebus creaturæ, quædam quidem eorum adjacent Deo, quædam autem & in nostram venerunt scientiam, quid mali est, si & eorum quæ in Scripturis requirantur, universis Scripturis spiritualibus existentibus, quædam quidem*

*absolvamus secundum gratiam Dei; quædam autem commendamus Deo, & non solum in hoc sæculo, sed in futuro, ut semper quidem Deus doceat, homo autem semper discat, quæ sunt a Deo?* [Here, by way of Confirmation, he cites St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. v. 13.] *Semper enim fides quæ est ad magistrum nostrum permanet firma, asseverans nobis, quoniam solus verè Deus,* [and afterwards concludes] *si secundum hunc modum quem diximus, quædam quidem questionum Deo commiserimus, & fidem nostram servabimus, & omnis Scriptura ideo nobis data, consonans nobis invenietur.* Lib. 2. Adv. Hær. cap. 47. Ed. Eras. I have cited this at large, because I find every thing agreeable to the Hypothesis I have hitherto advanc'd. As,

1<sup>st</sup>, *Mystery* is indisputably apply'd to *reveal'd Truths*, beyond the reach of Humane Comprehension.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Such *reveal'd Truths* apparently deliver'd in Scripture, are not to be reject'd; because we cannot resolve the Difficulties that seem to accompany the Belief of 'em, but to embrace 'em as the Word of GOD, and

and consequently as founded in infinite Wisdom and Veracity.

3<sup>dly</sup>, Our Unskilfulness, not to say Inabilities, in comprehending Objects of Sense, or Physical Matters, is made an Argument, that there are *Mysteries* in Matters of Revelation.

I have hitherto confit'd my self to his Rule, *i. e.* the Fathers of the Three First Centuries; but truly I can see no just reason why the Fathers of after-Ages may not be admitted into the present Controversie, at least as Witnesses, if not Judges. I'm sure there can nothing abstract, but his groundless Fiction of a general Combination, to resolve all *Religion* into *Mystery*: For, as for the received Use or Signification of the Word, certainly after-Ages may be as competent Judges as those of the First Century: And, as for the Controversie itself, Whether there's any Doctrine in Christianity *mysterious*, certainly that Age ought to be appeal'd to, that had a more special occasion to bring the Controversie upon the Stage, and this the *Arrian* Age, and those that follow'd it; for;

in this Age it's well known, those Doctrines we contend, are *mysterious*, were more nicely controverted. I shall therefore add to those Passages already cited, a few more, which prove the Use of the word to be apply'd to things incomprehensible; and that there are Doctrines in Christianity pronounc'd *Mysteries*, and that too for the Incomprehensibleness of 'em. The first I shall instance in is *Dionys. Areop.* where in one place he describes our Saviour's Incarnation, *θεαρχικὴν τῆς ἀφθέρτου θεοπλασίας μυστικὴν*, *Cap. 4. de Cælest. Hierarch.* In another place, *ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ πάσης θεολογίας ἐμφανέστατον, ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἰησοῦ θεοπλασία, καὶ Ἀρρητὸς τότε λόγος παντὶ, καὶ ἀγνώστῳ νοῦ παντὶ, καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀρετῶν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀγγέλων, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀνδρικῶς ἐστρωθῆναι μυστικῶς παρελήφασιν*, *Sect. 9. Cap. 2. de Divinis Nomin.* The second Instance is from a Tract entitl'd, *Expositio Fidei*, rejected indeed as a Piece of *Justin Martyr*; yet from *Leontin's*, and other concluding Arguments, justly esteem'd to be the Product of the *Arrian* Age: He stiles the Unity and Trinity, *Ἀπόρρητον*, and confesses it cannot be

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unfolded by Words, *γλῶσση τὴ πηλὴν συγκρικῶ ὑπὸντι*, and upon the Incarnation of Christ, *ὡς τὰν ἐγὼ ὑπὸντι ἐπαπορήσω, τότε τὸ μυστικὴν χειρὶ ἀνακρίνω τὸ θαῦμα, ὅτι ὑπὲρ νοῦ, ὑπὲρ λόγου, ὑπὲρ κατὰληψαν ὁρίσας φυσικῶς*: And in such deep Research, at last, concludes with this Rule: *ὑψημένοις ἐπὶ μὲν λύσιν τὴν πίσιν.*

And now we may conclude this Chapter much in the same strain that he does *N. 45.* I do not find but [*the Fathers of the three first Centuries have exactly the same Notions of Mystery, as well as those that follow them,*] and for an Allay to his Jealousies, I think they are pretty consistent as well as unanimous; but then this Consistency and Unanimity happens to be against a trifling Reasoner, and therefore I must take the Reverse to his concluding Period; [*and justly hope, by this time, the Cause of Incomprehensible and Inconceivable, or Mysteries in Religion, will be more zealously maintain'd by all that sincerely respect Fathers, Scripture, or Reason.*]

I come now to the Fourth Chapt. *Sect. 3.* which is an Answer to some Scripture-Objections, and particular-

ly from the Nature of Faith. I now find this Discourse swells upon me beyond Expectations; and therefore, as for the Scripture-passages cited by him, tho' there is more in 'em than he has suggested, yet I shall pass 'em, especially because I think the Merits of the Cause does by no means turn upon 'em: I shall therefore take up his Friend's Arguments concerning the Nature of Faith, and try if he may not be compel'd by dint of Argument, since he would not embrace the Advice of his Friend, N. 51.

And first, As for what he has delivered, N. 52, 53. I find nothing but what has already received an Answer, [*particularly what is cited, Sect. 2. c. 2, & 7.*] or at least, but what amounts to no more than will be concluded by what I'm going to offer; and therefore he may take it for a full, or competent Answer, *viz.* Reason is a necessary Handmaid, or Instrument of Faith; in so much, that we must believe upon Rational Motives and Convictions: And thus far, I know no Son of the Church of England, that will dissent from

from him. As for what is delivered, N. 54. [*That Faith consists of two parts, Knowledge and Assent.*] I think no one will be so absurd to deny it; for I'm perswaded there can be no Assent without Knowledge: Therefore, in a word, had I known his Design, I should have excused the labour of citing so many Texts to prove it, and in a few words grant, *That in those things we call the pure Credenda of Religion, we are at least to know so much, as will enable us to form an Imperfect Idea of what it is God proposes to our Belief; but it does not imply such a Knowledge, as enables to unravel and comprehend the whole Nature of the Object, or the very Modes of its Existence, or Properties; or much less, give a Rationale of every thing that belongs to it.* No, if we know as much as instructs us what it is God proposes to our Belief, we submit all the Difficulties that may arise from the Belief of it, to God's Power and Wisdom, and yield an Assent (notwithstanding some seeming Absurdities) upon the Infinite Veracity of God. This distinguisheth

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Faith

Faith from a bare rational Assent in common Matters; and all this is consistent with what he has delivered, *N. 55, 56.* and therefore I shall not ingage in a particular Examination of what is there offered, To proceed then in order to a clear Demonstration of this Notion of Faith, I shall not consider the Case of *Abraham's* Faith (being the next thing that offers it self) but shall instance in the Belief of the Creation; Thro' Faith we understand, that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God; so that Things which are seen, were made of Things which do not appear, *Heb. xi. v. 3.* Here I think is a vast difference between God's creative Power, in raising the World out of nothing, and restoring a dead Person to Life again, before the corruptible part was any wise dissolved. Indeed I cannot conceive how we can form an Idea of the possibility of such a Production; that God should raise so vast a stock of Matter, even all created Nature, and every thing that we can form any tolerable Ideas of, and yet without any

ny Materials to work upon, can never be comprehended. The *Platonist* supposed a Soul to the World, and the *Aristotelian* a first Mover, but could never give any tolerable account of the Rise of Mundane Matter, without making it eternal. In short, they always taught, That an Agent necessarily supposes a Patient really distinct from the Patient, especially in external Actions; And we know in Numbers it's universally true, *Ex nihilo nihil est.* And we can conceive no otherwise in Nature, at least the Reasoner cannot on his Principles pretend to it; for he tells us, we can form no manner of Idea of nothing; and therefore how it is possible to form an Idea of the Creation by common Ideas, when all our Ideas take their rise from Created Beings, even that of the Infinite and Eternal Being, are resembled by Objects of his own production. It's true, we say this is an effect of Infinite Power, but we have no notion of the Thing, unless we apply Infinite Power to that which is the Subject of it, which is nothing into every

very thing ; and when all is done, we form an Idea of this Infinite Power, purely by the Effects of it in Finite Beings : So that upon the whole, it's evident, the Belief of the Creation, (that implys a Production of all things out of nothing) is an Object that exceeds Humane Comprehension ; and consequently we may conclude, that Faith (which yields an Assent to the Doctrine of the Creation) often implys an Assent to a Thing that contains something in it, that is Incomprehensible. And indeed, that Objects of Faith contain Things that exceed Humane Comprehension, is a Truth so indisputable, that Faith in the Judgment of the Primitive Church-Writers, was on this account distinguished from Knowledge or Science. ' It's true ; ' In all Objects of Faith, we are to ' know so much of 'em, as to direct ' us what it is God proposes to our ' Belief. And Secondly, We are to ' believe, That it is God that proposes 'em. Thirdly, In all Acts of ' Faith we are to yield an Assent to ' the Truth, or Being of Things ; and ' this

' this supposes, that we have formed ' at least an imperfect Idea of their ' Nature ; but for the *Quomodo sint*, ' that is, for the Manner of their Being, or Existence, that may be an ' act of Knowledge, or Science, but ' not of Faith ; so that if seeming ' Contradictions or Absurdities arise ' on this account, and consequently ' are thus far justly Incomprehensible, Faith throws us upon the Infinite Veracity of God. All this I shall endeavour to confirm by the Authorities of the Primitive Church. And,

*First*, The Passage already cited from *Irenaeus* manifestly instructs us, That there are Difficulties and MYSTERIES in *Revealed Truths*, which *Humane Reason* cannot comprehend, and obliges us to commit all such Matters to GOD, because they were delivered by his Word and Spirit ; and what is this, but to embrace and believe upon his Infinite Veracity ? And at last concludes, That if we observe the Method, *Fidem nostram servabimus, & omnis Scriptura à Deo nobis data, consonans nobis invenietur* : Does

Does not this imply, that there are things contained in Matters of Faith, that are Incomprehensible? Yea, rather that all seeming Difficulties, or Absurdities that arise from 'em, when scann'd by common Notions, or Ideas, are to be committed to God as the best Expedient to preserve a right *Faith*, see *Pag. 64.* But,

*Secondly, Clemens Alexand.* seems to state the Notion of *Faith* more clearly, in opposition to Science: And first he fixes the *Foundation of Faith* in the Word of GOD, or the *Holy Scriptures*, and represents it as an Irrefragible Foundation, that carries the highest Demonstration in it; and that we are to enquire no further than *Ipse dixit*, upon which he advances this Maxim, Ἀλήθεια γὰρ ὁ λέγων, ὁ δὲ ἀπιστοῦς, πρὸς λέγοντι, ἠπίσταντο πρὸς Θεῷ. And to let us see how far he extends it, he instances in the fore-cited Passage to the *Heb. Cap. xii. v. 12.* and thence proceeds to state the Difference between *Science* and *Faith*, thus, ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀπιστήμη ἐξ ἰσ ἀποδείκνυται, ἡ πίστις δὲ χάρις ἐξ ἀναποδείκτων, *Vid. Stro. Lib. 2. P. 362, 3, 4.* and in his 5th Book he's more

more full, ὁ ἀπίστος ὁ παρεχόμενος ἵνα ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν μὴ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἐν δυναμείῳ Θεοῦ τη μένῃ, ἀνθ' ἧς ἀποδείξεων, διὰ ἡλπίς τῆς πίστεως σώζειν δυναμένη. Here we see, *Faith* is resolved into the Infinite Power and Veracity of GOD; inſomuch, that we are obliged to believe; as soon as we know it to be the Word of GOD, or as soon as we know GOD proposes any thing to our Belief: Here we find Science and Faith opposed, the one requiring Demonstration or Arguments, drawn from the Nature of the Thing; the other, not so: Therefore we must conclude, That if GOD proposes any thing to our Belief, that contains Matters incomprehensible, or not reconcileable with common Notions; *Faith*, in the Opinion of this Father, will command an *Assent*; inſomuch, that his Infinite Power and Veracity must over-balance all seeming Absurdities and Contradictions.

But to conclude this Argument, I shall produce the Judgment of *St. Chrysostom*: Thus he assigns the Reason, why the Natural Man cannot receive the Things that be of GOD, 1 *Cor. ii. v. 14. viz.* For the Im-

Immensities of the Things themselves, far exceeding the Comprehension of the most Improved Reason; and for the want of Faith, τέπει οπ πίστεως δέεται τα λεγόμενα, καὶ λόγοις ἀυτὰ καλαλαβεῖν ἔκ ἐνι, ὑπερβαίνει γὰρ ἀυτῶν τὸ μέγεθος ἐκ πολλῶ τὸ πλείονος τῆς ἡμετέρας διανοίας τὴν εὐφείλειαν, *Hom.* 7. And upon the Article of the Creation, *Heb.* xi. v. 3. he tells us, The Mind that is prepared for the Reception of Faith, must be πῶς αὐτὸς ὑπερβαίνει τὴν αἰσθητικὴν καὶ τὴν αἰσθητικὴν καὶ λογισμῶν πῶν ἀνθρώπων παρεργαζομένης; she must be elevated above Sense, and all sensible Objects; and pass over the Weakness of Humane Reasonings; and afterwards, Whereas, says he, Faith is vilified as a Thing that is void of Demonstration, ἀναπόδεικτον πρόγμα; or rather, a Thing full of Folly, καὶ ἀπίστης μᾶλλον ὄν, the *Apostle* shews us in this one Instance, ἐπὶ τῷ μέγιστῳ διὰ πίστεως καὶ ἔτι διὰ λογισμῶν κατ' ὁρ. δύναι; for the very Article, says he; is not established by Reason, but rather the contrary; ὁ μὲν γὰρ λογισμὸς ἐδὲν ὑποβάλλει τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐνδύειον. *Hom.* 22. In *Epist. Heb.*

Again we find him describing Faith under the very same Notion, *Hom.*

*Hom.* 23. in *Ter. Johan.* where, upon *Nichodemus's* Words, *How can a Man be born when he is old?* v. 4. he observes, τὸ γὰρ [πῶς τῶτο] ἔστι σφόδρα πιστευόντων ἐστὶν ἐκπαρόρρησις ἢ δὲ ἀπὸ γῆς ἐπ. Upon which he enlarges, and tells us, It is the Question of Hereticks upon the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour, (demanding, πῶς ἐσαρκώθη πῶς ἐγενήθη) that by the weakness of common Notions, or Reasonings, destroy his Immense Nature, καὶ τῇ τὸ δεικνύον λογισμῶν ἀσθένεια, τὴν ἀπειρον ἐκείνην ἀποβαλλόντες ἑστίαν; and at last concludes, That such Practices, or Questions, τῆς πίστεως ἐκπισθῆναι τῆς ὁρθῆς. And on the Second Part of the Question, about entering the Womb a Second time, he observes, When a Man proceeds upon common Notions, or Reasonings in Spiritual Matters, and does not receive the Dictates of Faith, καὶ μὴ δεχεται τὴν τῆς πίστεως συγκατάθεσιν. He talks like a Drunken or Madman, uttering the most absurd and ridiculous things.

And now, certainly, we may conclude, what *St. Chrysostom's* Notion of Faith was, without drawing Inferences

ferences ; and that it every way agrees with that of *Clemens Alexandrinus* : It's therefore manifest, Faith is distinguished from Knowledge, or Science, not only as the Objects of it are Matters of Revelation, but as they contain Things that are incomprehensible ; and yet it yields an Assent upon the Infinite Veracity of the Word of GOD : I'm sure this Great Man has dropt such unlucky Words against our *Adversary's* Principles, or his Methods of Examining Divine Truths, as if he were risen from the Dead, and were preparing to accuse him of Heresie, or some sly Maxims that look that way. I should therefore advise him to weigh the Opinion of so Great a Person, before he advances too far : and yet, when I consider what severe Censures he has past upon the Writers of this Age, I despair of Success in giving Advice in this kind ; for I cannot think he'll ever be perswaded to take his Measures of Faith, from an Age, or any Writer in it, when he makes 'em, as it were, to have entred into a League to turn all Religion into *Mystery*,  
and

and this another to be Name for *Impoſture*, or *Prieſtcraft*: If this be true, to be instructed by ſuch a Race of Men, is, in plain *Engliſh*, to take up one's Faith from thoſe that have fallen away from the Faith; but of this I ſhall ſay more in the laſt Chapter.

To return then: It's now abundantly evident, that the Notion of Faith which we now contend for, is not a Thing contrived to advance a particular Hypotheſis, or ſerve a particular Deſign, but by no means ſuch a one as he ſuggeſts, *viz.* [*To ſtop the Mouths of ſuch as demand a Reaſon where none can be given, and to keep as many in Ignorance, as Intereſt ſhall think convenient.* See N. 48.] But I hope an Impartial Reader will find it eſtabliſh'd upon a good Foundation, or in a word, upon ſuch Reaſons as he is not able to ſubvert or remove; beſide, if it be a Contrivance, we have this Apology, that it is not a late Forgery, ſince we have traced it almoſt as far as any Eccleſiaſtical Records, (beſides thoſe of Scripture) admit of; and this is a conſiderable

Presumption of the Injustice of such foul-mouthed Aspersions, till he gives us a better Set of Arguments to remove it; which is the next Thing that should be examined: but truly there appears so little in 'em, that I think they scarce deserve a distinct Examination:

The First is, [*If Faith were not a Persuasion resulting from the previous Knowledge and Comprehension of the Thing believed, there could be no Degrees nor Differences of it.*] Now First, It's manifest, the Argument is advanced on a false Supposition, (and that which runs thro' all his Observations) viz. That we deny all Degrees of a previous Knowledge of the Object; whereas we say, there must be at least such a previous knowledge of the Object, as instructs us what it is GOD proposes to our Belief; but there's no necessity of Comprehending the Absolute Nature of the Thing, so as to be able to give a *Rationale* of every Thing that really belongs to it; and that too, by trying it by common Notions. And moreover, we say, the different Degrees of

of Faith, do by no means rise from such a Comprehensive Knowledge: No, when once we know what GOD proposes to our Belief, the Degrees of Faith arise from the Application of GOD's Veracity to our Minds and Consciences; if the Mind is possessed with a deep Sence of it, as to engage us to place an absolute Confidence in it, tho' we cannot form a *Rationale* of the Thing, yet we may embrace it with the highest Degrees of Faith: I'm sure, this is the Doctrine which [*this Man of Reason*] might have learn'd from S. Paul, in the Case of Abraham, *Who against Hope, believed in Hope,---and being not weak in Faith, he considered not his own Body now dead, nor yet the Deaddness of Sarah's Womb: he staggered not at the Promise thro' Unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to GOD, and being fully perswaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness, Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20, 21.*

2d Arg. [*The Subject of Faith must be intelligible to all, since the Belief*

belief thereof is commanded under no less a Penalty than Damnation. ] As for the Intelligibleness of Objects of Faith, I have already stated how far that is necessary ; but, with Submission, I think the Sin and Damnation of Unbelief, arises, not because GOD has furnish'd us with a perfect *Rationale* of the Nature of every Object of Faith, and we reject it ; but because he hath furnish'd us with Means sufficient to know what he hath propos'd to our Belief, and to know that he hath propos'd them, and we will fully reject 'em ; and consequently what he proposes : but more especially, because he hath asserted the Truth of 'em, by the highest Demonstrations of the Spirit, in mighty Signs and Wonders : This was the Case of the *Jews* ; but now ye say, Ye see, therefore your Sin remaineth.

4th Arg. [*Except Faith signifies an Intelligible Persuasion, we cannot give others a Reason of the Hope that is in us.*] The Inference is apparently false ; for we certainly give a Reason ( and that too, according to the Mind

Mind of St. Peter) of any Article of Faith, when we prove that it is Revealed by GOD, and that we yield an Assent to the Truth of it (tho' we cannot remove every Difficulty that may arise from it) upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity.

As for his *Third*, and *Fifth Observations*, I shall Appeal to any unprejudiced Reader, whether there's any thing in 'em, that deserves a particular Reply, more than in those Objections he first fram'd, and then answered : For as the former prove nothing against the Incomprehensibleness of Matters of Faith, so the latter were never advanced, to prove the Necessity of admitting such Objects of Faith. Upon the whole then, I think it appears, there are Matters of Faith that contain Things in 'em, which are Incomprehensible, and yet Faith yields an Assent upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity, and consequently it's an uncontrollable Argument, there are *Mysteries* in the *Christian Religion*.

The next thing to be considered, is, his Reply to the Argument of Mi-

rales, *Cap. 5. Sect. 3.* And, First, he entertains you with the Nature of a Miracle. And as for the Description he gives us, I find, in the Main, no Reason to except against it; after this, he guards it with some Limitations: The First of which is, That a Miracle is not to be admitted contrary to Reason; I suppose, he means contrary to common Notions, or those Idea's which Reason has formed from Sense, Experience, or Instruction. And, no doubt, this is a very just Limitation: 'For a Miracle is performed upon Objects of Sense; and 'tis an Address to our Senses, or a Demonstration accommodated to the outward Senses, by some sensible Effects, or Operations; and consequently, nothing is to be admitted as a Miracle, that contradicts the Testimony of the Senses: and we are, at least, so far Judges of its possibility, that in Case it manifestly contradicts the Testimony of our Sense, we may justly rank it among Impossibilities, and reject it as such. But further than this, I cannot discern, that we are com-

competent Judges of the Possibility of any Miracle; for to judge of its Possibility, supposes a knowledge of its *Modus*: But this our *Adversary* will not allow; [*For the manner of Miracles, (says he) is not explicable.* N. 77.

Thus far we are agreed; but I know not how this Limitation, much less those that follow, affect the present Controversie. Indeed, he at last comes to the Point, and tells us, [*Miracles are not above Reason, tho' we know nothing of the Modus.*] But I would fain know, why a Thing that contains somewhat in the Nature of it, which exceeds Human Comprehension, is not as properly *above Reason*, or *Mysterious*, as a Thing (in itself intelligible) only it lies dormant, because shadowed thro' a Veil. I'm sure, *Origen* tells the contrary, *Comment. in Mat. 19. 24, 26. ut supra.* See pag, 61.

But I have exposed the Folly of this Assertion in another place. Indeed, I should have turned his own Arguments upon him, had he not prevented me, by reviving 'em in such a manner, as gives me a better

advantage over him. We have it thus, [*At the beginning of my Book, I maintained, the Manner, as well as the Thing was explicable. But of what? Of Miracles. No, surely; but of those Doctrines, in Confirmation of which the Miracles are wrought. See N. 77.*] This is truly an unaccountable Paradox. Miracles are certainly the Demonstrations of Sense, and consequently are to be scann'd and judg'd of by common Ideas, even the most clear and indisputable, such as result from *Objects of Sense*; but it's concluded, that *Matters of Revelation* are founded on Objects that are Spiritual and Infinite, and consequently are to us more abstruse and incomprehensible.

Again, Miracles are a direct and immediate Address to the Sense and Reason of Mankind, and are design'd to give an unquestionable Credit to every *reveal'd Truth*, since they procure the Testimony of Infinite Veracity in the behalf of it; and therefore, all the *Reason and Arguments* in Nature will direct, that they should pass the severest Scrutiny. But in  
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*Matters of Revelation* it's concluded, that a great deal rests upon the Authority of Infinite Veracity, and this depends upon the Evidence of Miracles; and therefore it's absurd to demand a clearer and more precise Comprehension of the Nature of *reveal'd Truths* than of *Miracles*.

This Gentleman owns, that *Miracles* are a Confirmation of *reveal'd Truths*; that is, at least, as they are an absolute Attestation of their Divine Original: And this is an uncontrollable Demonstration of the Truth of them. Indeed I'm perswaded the meekest Novice in Logick will tell him, That we are to have, at least, as adequate a Knowledge of that which is to confirm, as that which is confirmed by it; or that the Premises are to carry as great Evidence in 'em as we expect in the Conclusion: Therefore it's absurd to say, that the *Modus* of *Miracles* is inexplicable, and the *Modus* of all *reveal'd Truths* not so. Indeed this Gentleman seems to have furnish'd us with Weapons to fence against him with the greatest Advantage; for if such Positions as these  
must

must pass for Truth, it must be Truth in a *Mystery*. And truly, we could not have desir'd a better Argument against him; for, if the *Modus* of *Objects of Sense* be inexplicable, certainly the *Modus* of *reveal'd Truths* are much more inexplicable; the Immenfeness of whose Nature to a Finite Mind, renders them incomprehensible.

Again, the *Modus* of *Objects of Sense* is not to be explain'd by Ideas of the same kind; much less, is the *Modus* of Infinite and Spiritual Objects to be explain'd by the Ideas of *Objects of Sense*: 'So that, in a word, 'since *Miracles* (as *Objects of Sense*, 'with respect to the *Modus* of 'em) 'are inexplicable, and by consequence justly to be esteem'd above 'Reason, much more are Matters of 'Revelation, with respect to their 'Modus, to be esteem'd inexplicable, 'above Reason, and consequently mysterious.

I come now to examine, in the last place, his pretended Historical Account of the Rise of *Mystery*, and the Causes of it, under this Title, [When, why,

why, and by whom were Mysteries brought into Christianity, Cap. 6. Sect. 3.] And truly I am perswaded what has already been deliver'd will be esteem'd (by an impartial Reader) a sufficient Confutation to this whole Chapter, (at least if it answers the Title) without examining any Paragraph: However, I think it deserves no Answer, but a short Reply to the Title, and that is capable of no other, but such as we give to an impertinent Question of the *Romanists*, *Where was your Religion before Luther?* 'As to the time when *Mystery* 'was introduc'd, I hope it's sufficiently prov'd to be of the same Date 'with Christianity itself, being founded not in *Names* or *Words* only, 'but in *Certain Truths*, that are propos'd as *Objects of Faith*. But, 2dly, 'for the Person by whom, or that 'introduc'd it, I'm perswaded there's 'enough offer'd to charge it upon the 'Blessed Author of the Institution. 'Lastly, For the Reason why *Mysteries* were introduc'd, I shall leave 'em to this notable Reasoner to dispute it out with the Infinite Wisdom

'dom of GOD, in not creating Man  
'with larger and more comprehen-  
'sible Faculties, or not contriving  
'some more familiar Method of Re-  
'demption. And now, if what has  
already been deliver'd stands good  
against this Author, (there being as  
yet no reason to suspect it) I'll appeal  
to all the World, whether it does not  
destroy the malicious Suggestions of  
this Chapter, which make *Mystery* to  
be a Trick of *Priestcraft*, contriv'd  
for the support of Secular Grandeur  
and Dominion.

But, to descend to a few Particu-  
lars; He observes, (and that too with  
a great deal of Contempt and Scorn)  
That the Christian Church initiated  
their Converts in a Way and Method  
not much unlike that of the Heathen  
World; which is the most he can  
make of all his *Allegations*. Now we  
own, the Christian Converts were  
gradually initiated, that they were  
rank'd in several Classes, and had a  
Discipline, and Instructions, peculiar  
to each Class, and thereupon prohi-  
bited the publication of the sublimest  
Parts of Religion, to any but those  
that

that had gone through the inferiour  
Classes; and truly, such Injunctions  
have not only the unquestionable  
Dictates of Prudence for their Vindi-  
cation, but Apostolick Practice and  
Approbation; for 'tis the establish'd  
Method with the *Hebrew* Converts,  
as well as those at *Corinth*; they  
were brought on gradually to Per-  
fection, first by Milk, then by strong  
Meats, the one accommodated to  
Babes in Christ, the other to those of  
full age; see *Heb. v. ver. 12, 13, 14.*  
and *1 Cor. iii. 2.* where it's proba-  
ble the *Jewish* Converts were first in-  
structed in those Scriptures that set  
forth the easiest parts of our Saviour's  
Offices, as *Prophet, Priest, and King*;  
but afterwards, those that asserted  
his Divinity. I'm sure *St. Clement*  
makes these Babes to be the *Catechu-  
mens*, or those that were instructed  
in the Catechistick Parts of Christia-  
nity; but the Perfect, those that  
were instructed in the sublimest parts  
of *Religion*; to wit, the *Essence* of the  
*Divine Nature*. But now the great  
Crime is, that all these Measures of  
Initiation were taken from the Hea-  
thens:

thens: And this is prov'd, because they are much the same.

It is not now my business to examine the Parallel; tho' I must confess there are, in a great many things, very lively Resemblances: But as for the Crime, I cannot discern where that lies, since the Christians did not symbolize with any Design to form a Comprehension between *Heathenism* and *Christianity*; nor (as this Author suggests) out of an Opinion of any Religion contain'd in such Rites, see *N. 97.* but out of a Zeal for GOD; and the Souls of Men, they, in *St. Paul's* Language, *became all things unto them, that if possible they might enlarge the Territories of Christ's Kingdom, and save some*; for, as long as they acted on these Principles, I think there was no more Guilt in 'em, than in *St. Paul's* occasional Compliances with *Jewish* Rites. Indeed our Adversary elsewhere [*Num. 78, 79.*] gives this very account of these Initiations or Compliances; and therefore, I cannot conceive how he can justify so base an Aspersion, *viz. N. 90.* [*Here is enough to shew how*  
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*Christianity became mysterious, and how so Divine an Institution did, thro' the Craft and Ambition of Priests and Philosophers, degenerate into meer Paganism.*] It's well known there are other Accounts given of those Religious Rites that were introduc'd in the Primitive Church, than those already assign'd; and those too, that are abundantly sufficient to vindicate the Lawfulness of 'em: I shall refer him to *St. Cyril*, the Author he has cited, who is very particular on this Subject.

But, in a word, it's manifest they were in 'emselfes the best Expedients to maintain the Discipline of the Church, and establish a regular and uniform Piety, as well as orthodox, clear, and well-digested Faith; so unjust is the Charge, that makes 'em Artifices to introduce *Mystery, Ignorance, and Blind Obedience.*

2dly, As for those Emblematical Rites introduc'd in the Administrations of the Christian Sacraments, they might possibly contribute to the establishing *Mysteries* in a *Jewish* Sence, as it is us'd for Typical Representations,

tions : but they seem to have no tendency to establish Mystery in the sense we contend for ; I mean, as it is put for Incomprehensible Truths.

But let us *reflect* a little on the *Baseness* of this *Accusation* : Here's a general Combination in the Pastors of the Catholick Church, and a great many Hellish Designs form'd in the Womb of it ; *Ambition* and *Covetousness* is the original Spring, *Ceremony* and a great many *superfluous Rites* the Instrument, and the grand Designs were to turn *Religion* into *Mystery*, even to that degree, that in the Opinion of this Author, it has made a Divine Institution degenerate into Paganism ; *N. 90.* But, for what Reason ? Purely because some Christian Rules of Discipline resemble the Religious Rites of Heathens ; for, there can no other be fix'd on those that are truly Primitive. If this be so, I'm sure the Censure is extravagantly absurd. What if a sober Heathen acts upon the strict Rules of Justice, and abhors Slander and Detraction, more than this Calumniator ; must not a good Christian practice the

the same Virtue, for fear of being charg'd with Paganism ? I'm sure the Case is the same where the Thing is innocent or lawful.

Indeed, this Gentleman declaims against *Mystery* very heartily, but I am afraid he has too much dealing with one sort of it ; for, such *Illogical*, such *Groundless*, such *Vile Aspersions*, must take their Rise from the *Mystery of Iniquity*, that reigns in the high places ; for 'tis nothing else but the Language of him that is justly stiled, *the Accuser of his Brethren.*

But, to proceed a little further, I find he has an immortal Abhorrence of the *Cross in Baptism*, of *Altars*, of the *Dedication* or *Consecration* of *Churches*, *Musick*, the *Rites of Burial* ; and, in a word, of the *Institution* of *National Churches*, which he seems to call *Human Faction*, or *Policy*, in one place ; [See *pag. 172. Ed. 2.* and *Usurpations upon Mankind* in another, *N. 93.*] Now these are Rites and Sanctions enjoyn'd and practis'd in the Establish'd Church of *England* ; and when he thinks fit to discover wherein the Evil of them consists, or that the People of this National

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Church are not obliged to yield an Obedience to 'em, I promise an *Answer*, and such as will set him off in his own Colours and Language too; that is, prove him an impertinent Trifler. It's true, he seems to explode 'em, because [*nothing like these are in the Writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contain'd in the Books of the Gentiles, and was the Substance of their Worship:*] when we make such things the Substance of our Worship, then let him accuse us: "But as for the Necessity of finding the particular Ceremonies in the Writings of the Apostles, we say there's none; it's sufficient we find 'em by a fair Consequence, inas- much as we find an Ecclesiastical Power commissioned to enact prudent Laws for the Peace and Unity of the Church, for the maintenance of Decency, Order, and Uniformity in the Publick Worship of God; and as long as Ceremonies are chosen, with respect to the Number, so as not to bring a Burden, and create Distraction in the Publick Worship of God, and with respect to the Nature of 'em, inasmuch as

"they

"they carry a manifest Tendency towards the Advancement of the Ends of Religion.

Again, we say Apostolick Practice or Tradition, and an uninterrupted Custom of the Primitive Church, is certainly a considerable Argument not only of the Lawfulness, but Authority of 'em, especially so as that none shall dispute an Obedience, where once they are enjoyn'd by our proper Ecclesiastical Superiours. I'm sure *Tertullian* makes this an expresse Rule of Obedience in these matters, tho' this Author, by the help of a false Citation, seems to insinuate the contrary: *Harum & aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum si legem expostules Scripturarum nullam invenies: Traditio tibi prætenditur* [by way of Rule, whereas he reads it, *prætenditur*] *Auctrix, consuetudo confirmatrix, & fides observatrix*, Lib. de Coron. c. 4.

But to draw towards a Conclusion, I do not now intend a formal Vindication of Ceremonies; however, I think I have offered enough to publish the Ignorance or Impudence of the Man; when he asserts, That [*nothing is so naturally opposite as Ce-*

emony and Christianity, N. 95.] What, even those that are appointed to determine (for Decency, and Uniformity's sake) the Natural Circumstances of Publick Worship, such as Time, Place, and Manner? 'Let him make this out by dint of 'Argument, and I'll engage (as was 'offered before) he shall have a fair 'Answer. And now I have gone thro' a tedious Harrangue, which whether it be more made up of Impotent Malice, or Illogical Conclusions, is disputable; and therefore, I think myself happy to arrive at his Conclusion, and more happy that I find little in it, that either deserves, or can justly provoke a Reply: for I find him either bantering the World with his own Objections, and Answers, which if placed in the Balance, will not weigh a Grain to effect the Merits of the Cause either way, or giving 'em an account of his next Undertakings, tho' in his last Edition, he's so prudent to add a *Reserve*, that I'm much afraid will baulk the Expectation of the Thing; for he let's us know, he'll take his own time for it, as a thing not in the Command of  
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any Mortal; and I'm perswaded he'll prove the Maxim by experimental Demonstration; for, I believe, want of Health, or Business, or something else, will make it a good while before he puts his finishing hand to his new intended System of Divinity. One or two things, however, I cannot but remark, before I take a final leave. And,

First; After all this Argument, the Reader may imagine that the Difference between us is not considerable; for he allows, That we cannot pretend to an Adequate Knowledge of Things; and we say, That *Divine Truths* are chiefly *Mysterious*, in respect of the *Modus* of 'em; and as it's impossible to comprehend the *Mysterious* part of 'em, so we grant it's not necessary to be known, or comprehended: But yet for all this, the *Difference* is very considerable; for this Gentleman peremptorily affirms, That the *Modus* of all *Revealed Truths*, is explicable; see *Num. 77. Sect. 3.* And in the Conclusion he tells us, If his Hypothesis stands good, [*Whatever Instance can be alledged* (he means in contradiction  
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to it) *must either be found not Myfterious, or if it prove a Myftery, not Divinely revealed;*] fo that he has formed a moft Compendious Rule for difcarding the fundamental Doctrines of Chriftianity, if any be propofed, whole *Modus* he cannot comprehend, and that too by common Ideas, or Notions, his Hypothefis directs, That they are to be rejected as not Divinely revealed: Indeed, whofoever furveys his Hypothefis, may at the firft glance difcern this to be the Design, though he had not blabed out the Secret in the clofe of it; and certainly the Design is fo pernicious, and (tho' formed on a weak Hypothefis) liable to influence an unwary Reader, and cheat him out of the main of his Creed, that I wonder this Gentleman has efaped fo long without being chaftifed by fome Pen more accurate than I can pretend to.

The Second thing I fhall take notice of is, The Provisions he has made againft an Answer; for he tells us, That [*no particular Instances, or Doctrines of any fort, can ferve for a proper Answer to this Difcourfe.*] This  
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is pretty well truly! He has been very Majefterial in advancing his own Positions, and will he be as abfolute in prefcribing to his Answerers? As if nothing muft pafs for an Answer, that is not formed by his Model, or has not received his *Imprimatur*. As for the force of Instances, it's very well known, that an oppofite Instance is perfect Demonftration againft a peremptory, and univerfal Position in an Adverfary; and the force of Positions, Arguments, or Notions that exift in Theory, or Universals, are beft illuftrated and imprinted by Instances. I'm fure he proceeds by thefe Meafures in all his Reasonings, and will he debar others of thofe Priviledges he allows himfelf? This is to make himfelf the abfolute Sovereign of Reason and Argument; as if the reft of Mankind had no Right to ufe any more of either, but what he cantons out by his own Weights, and Meafures. But he tells us, Instances can be no Answer to his Difcourfe, [*As long as the Reasons of it hold good:*] Very true, for if the Reasons hold good, the Inftances

stances alledg'd against 'em must be impertinent, or incompetent: But the Instances I have produced are levell'd against his *Reasons* and *Positions* too, and, I hope, they sufficiently destroy both, and then the Method of Answering will justify itself without his License or Approbation.

In a word, as for this Answer, I offer it to every candid impartial Reader with Deference and Submission, who, I question not, will pass over some little Slips or Blots that may arise thro' heat of Argument, if the main Lines are correct and clear. And as for this Gentleman, or his Zealous Admirers, I tender the Substance, or principal Parts of it, to be treated as he has peremptorily resolved at the foot of his Discourse; I mean, *give it no more Quarter than he will to Error*; but, according to his utmost Abilities and Opportunities, expose it in its true Colours; that he may not be charg'd as an Accessary against himself, in rendring his own Labours ineffectual, by weakly mincing or softening of any thing.

