

SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
TOUCHING

The Style
OF THE
H. SCRIPTURES;

EXTRACTED

From several parts of a Discourse, concerning divers
Particulars belonging to the Bible,

Written divers Years since to a Friend :

By the Honorable

ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

The Third Edition.

מִהַמְּלִיצָה לְחֵי מִדְּבַר מִדְּבַר

PSAL. 119. 103. 127

Πᾶσα γραφή, θεόπνευστος, καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς
διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγχόν. πρὸς ἐπα-
νόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ
2 Tim. 3. 6.

L O N D O N, a J

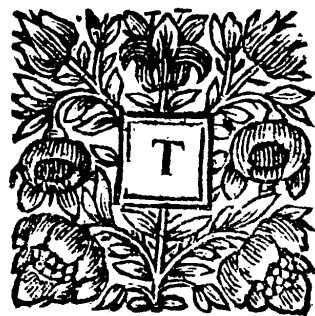
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TO THE EARL
OF
ORRERY,

One of the Lords *Justices* of the Kingdom
of *Ireland*, Lord *President* of the Province
of *Mounster*, &c.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,



That Sacred Book
which furnishes
our Preachers
both with their
Texts and a
Great Part of their Discourses
A 2 on

The Epistle

on them, being the Subject about which I am to entertain You, I presume it will not much surprize You, if what I shall Say in representing to You some Considerations on That book, relish more of a Sermon than of a Letter of Complement. And indeed it would so little become a Person that writes Of my Subject, and With my Design, to Startle at the very Beginning such Readers as he desires to Find or Make Devout, with any thing written in the Wonted strain of *Epistles Dedicatory* : and the Nature of the Treatise, to which
this

Dedicatory.

this Paper is premis'd, does allow so Little of that, whereof Custom, on such Occasions, is wont to challenge so Much; that I should let this Book come forth Undedicated, were it not that the Motives that induce me to Address it to You, are of such a Nature, that I hope that meerly by a plain Representation of them, I may Comply with what makes me look upon this Dedication as a Duty, without Departing from the serious Design I propos'd to my self in the Dedicated Book. Although then such Readers,

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as having perus'd Your Writings, shall cast their Eyes on mine, will I fear think it a bold Presumption in me to address Discourses concerning a Style to a Person so much and so justly applauded for His; Yet as several Reasons engage me to present You these Thoughts, so the fear of passing for Presumptuous for so doing, obliges me to Mention some of those Reasons. Whereof the first shall be, That your Kindness For, and your Resemblance in many particulars To, *Theophilus*, makes me often Phansie that I am yet
Enter-

Dedicatory.

Entertaining that Rare Person when I write on the behalf of the Scripture unto You. Who may also, I presume, remember (which is my Second Reason) that when seven or eight Years ago, I ventur'd to shew You Divers of these Papers, with others (that I yet suppress) belonging to the same Treatise, You were pleas'd to give me such a Permission, that in case they should ever be made Publick, I might Address what I had written at your Friend's desire particularly to You, as I took for an Engagement, if not a

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Command. So that how unlike soever the following Treatise is to that Best of Books it would Recommend : yet since You have thus made the Present Address a Duty , I must elect rather to Betray to You my Weaknesses , than not Manifest my Obedience. And to these , I must subjoyn this Third Consideration, (more prevalent perhaps with me than Both the former) that (as a homely Digger may shew a Man a Rich Mine) whatever the Book may be that I Present You , that which I Recommend to You

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Dedictory.

is a Matchless one ; and will, if so Discerning a Reader shall bring as much Assiduity as Capacity to discover its Privileges , appear so Worthy of what I have said of it , that I allow my self a Hope , the following Considerations will prove so Happy as either to Endear the Scripture to You, or, (by not appearing Such as so Good a Subject would suggest to a Good Pen,) Invite You to substitute Better in their Rooms. And in either of these Cases , I shall not have Cause to Repent of having Written them ; since they will prove Serviceable either

to

The Epistle

to the Book or to the Man to whom I most desire to be so. And this Hope I must again own to be the Chief Inducement of my venturing to present a Fragment of an Unpolish'd Treatise to a Person that is wont to Write such as are so Eloquent and Accomplish'd in their Kind. For though severe and not incompetent Judges of Compositions of this nature, have been pleas'd to give these Papers no disapproving Character; Yet since I present them to You, the Chief thing I dare pretend to in them, is only (as the Sing-
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Dedictory.

ing rare Songs Ill, is wont by an unheeded Indignation, to Engage the Possessors of rare Voices to make them admir'd;) by disclosing my Zeal and Insufficiencies, to Invite You to Rescue so Excellent a Theme as the Scripture, from so Dull a Pen as Mine, by employing your Happy one in its Defence and Celebration; Or, (if your Partiality should make you place any value on so Unfinish'd a Piece) to convince you how capable of Rare Thoughts my Subject is, by its being able to furnish so Barren a brain as Mine with
Accep-

The Epistle

Acceptable ones. And certainly, your Pen having no Less serv'd your Fame, than either your Sword, or your Employments (how high soever;) it could not but bring the Scripture more than a Few of the most Witty and Illustrious Votaries, if That Eloquence were Employ'd to Enamor them of that Divine Book, that hath made them so generally in Love with your Celebrated *Parthenissa*. I will not represent to you so pious an Exercise of your Rhetorick and Muse, as a Duty, for fear of Lessening the Dis-interess'dness

Dedictory.

ness'dness of the Employment I recommend to You, by implying, that You cannot Decline it without a Fault. I shall rather invite your Pen to Prefer it self To, and Grace Religious Subjects, by assuring You, that as there are none more Worthy of your Pen, so there are Few Pens more likely to Succeed upon some of them than Yours. Those handsome Essayes your Muse hath charm'd me with upon some Parts of the Bible, have given me Longings equally great and just, to see her, by a Devotedness to such Heavenly Themes,

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Themes, as Happy in the Choice of her Subjects, as she is wont to be in the Embellishing of them, and to have her make that her Chief Employment, wherein 'tis Best to Do, what she doth alwaies, succeed Well. And as with Burning-glasses, though we cannot make the Sun shine, yet when he Doth vouchsafe us his Heavenly Beams, we can with those Glasses both Encrease Light and Heat, and Carry and Settle them here and there as we see cause; so though with Wit and Parts, their Possessors could never have been

Dedictory.

been able to Engage God to *send forth his Light and his Truth*; yet now that Revelation Hath disclos'd them, and now he hath been pleas'd to make them Radiate in his Heavenly Word, men may with Knowledge and Eloquence happily Recollect those Scatter'd divine Beams, and Uniting them in Particular Subjects, and Kindling with them the Topicks proper to Warm and Work on our Affections, may powerfully Illustrate Truths and Enflame Zeal. Towards the latter end of the ensuing Papers you will find something said

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said to perswade our *Theophilus*, that the choicest Poetical and Rhetorical Ornaments, may without Injury to their Lustre, be Employ'd about such Subjects as may be chosen in the Scripture: But more and Better things to the same purpose, have since been said by our Ingenious Friend Mr. *Cowley*, who not only has employ'd much Eloquence to perswade that Truth in his Preface to his Poems, but has in One of them given a Noble Example, and consequently a Proof of it. I need not tell You, I mean his *Dauides*, a
Work

Dedicatory.

Work and Way of Writing, which since your Muse has already thought fit to Celebrate, I hope she will hereafter think fit to Imitate. And this I wish the more earnestly, because it hath been observ'd, that Secular Persons of Quality (of whom I have elsewhere occasion to name Divers) are generally much Successfuller in Writing of Religion, (to Gentlemen especially) than Scholasticks or Men in Orders; not only because their Style and way of Writing is observ'd to have in it some pleasing *Je ne scay*
B *quoy,*

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quoy , something of *Easie* Genuine and Handsom that's peculiar to It , (differing from Regular Eloquence as a *Good Meen* doth from Beauty) and Relishes of the native Gracefulness wont to attend on what they Do or Say ; but because their Writings attract More Readers by the Author's Conspicuousness , and make Deeper Impressions in them , by being suppos'd more Dis-interest'd , and look'd upon not as Suggested by their Profession or Self-ends , but at the Sincere Dictates of their Unbridled souls. For my part, though
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I am not so happy as to be much concern'd in all the precedent Considerations ; yet those that you will find towards the End of the longest Digression in the following Discourse , have been so Prevalent with me , that though some very Fair and very Perswasive Persons (whom perhaps I need not name to You) did , when I was writing the annexed Treatise , labour to divert my Pen to some more Youthful and more Fashionable Composures , by flattering me with a perswasion , that in those Attempts

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of that Nature I had formerly Occasion to make , I was not altogether unlucky ; Yet I , that would bring myself to prefer to a whole Wood of Bayes , the least Sprigg of the Tree of Life , am inclin'd to think , that a Christian may possibly find a higher Satisfaction in Perswading men to Pay praises to the Scripture , than in Receiving them from all the World besides ; and would think it more Desirable , (were the Choice His) to Discountenance prophane Wit , than live Unrival'd in the Glory of it. And though
for

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for my own particular , such a Temper be , I fear , more my Aim than my Attainment ; yet when I write of Sacred subjects , I had rather a Book of mine should resemble the Moon , which , though she be but Small , less Elevated , and full of Imperfections , lends yet an Useful Light to Men , and produces here and there a Motion that obeys a Heavenly Influence ; than a Star of the First Magnitude , which though more High , more Vast , and more Flawless , shines only bright enough to make it Self Conspicuous. Pardon me therefore , My
B 3 Dearest

The Epistle

Dearest Brother, if my Concern for Religion and You have made me Importunate in appearing so eagerly Sollicitous to see your applauded Pen Sanctify'd by, and Adorn the Best of Subjects: to Engage You to which, if the ensuing Discourse may but be so fortunate as in any Degree, or upon any Score, to contribute any thing, I shall either not esteem it a Trifle, or not Regret the having written it. For it is not alwayes so Despicable a piece of service as may be imagin'd, to Endear by particular Considerations, an Excellent Book, (and how
much

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much more that Incomparable Book the Scripture?) to a Person capable of Discovering and making Use of the Rare things it contains. To which purpose I might offer you divers more serious Instances, but shall only at present (a little to Divert you,) take this occasion to tell you, that *Ben. Johnson* passionately complaining to a learned Acquaintance of mine, that a Man of the long Robe, whom his Wit had rais'd to great Dignities and Power, had Refus'd to grant him some very Valuable thing he had Begg'd of him,

The Epistle

concluded with saying with an upbraiding Tone and Gesture to my Friend ; *Why the ungrateful Wretch knows very well, that before he came to Preferment, I was the Man that made him Relish* Horace. But to return to the following Book , Though I hope you do not think me so Vain as to doubt that it is suffer'd to come abroad with Imperfection enough to need my Excuses and your Pardon ; Yet since the Treatise itself is so unmeasurably Prolix (for a Part of an Essay,) it were unfit the Address of it should be so too ; and give your

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your Patience as great an Exercise upon the score of its Quantity , as upon that of its Quality : And therefore , referring you for what I might say of Apologetical, to what I say to the Reader ; I shall only adde , That though in *Epistles Dedicatory* , Custom hath made it a kind of Rudeness not to Expatiate in Praises and Conclude with Complements ; and though what You have Acted and what You have Written might supply a Person less concern'd than I , with Matter for a Panegyric Address ; yet since I told You at the Begin-

The Epistle

Beginning of this Letter, I should rather Preach than Complement in it, and since Praises fit to be ascrib'd to my Lord of *Orrery*, would be unfit to be ascrib'd him by his Brother; And since also, 'twere scarce more Uneasie for me to make You any other than Seeming Complements, than 'twere Presumptuous to address Any at all to so great a Master in the Art; I shall both decline Praises, which not to seem Flatteries where You are Not known, would perhaps be thought Detractions where you Are; and venture to Conclude this

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this Letter as I have Begun and Continu'd it, without Complement, upon the score of being Without, if not Above any,

My Dearest Brother,

Your most Affectionate
Brother, and most
Faithful Humble
Servant,

ROBERT BOYLE.

TO



T O T H E
R E A D E R.

The Author having with the Following Discourse sent the Publisher a Letter, which contains almost All the Particulars that would be Requisite to be taken Notice of in a Preface, it is thought fit to Premise instead of it, the Letter it self, as it was Address'd to Mr. *P. P. A. G. F. I.* (to favour whose Modesty, he is not now more Openly nam'd.)

S I R,



You will perhaps think it Strange, that a Person Obscure enough to Those he Loves, should be able to Hold out so Long against the Importunity of two such Powerful Sollicitors, as my Willingness to Own a Veneration for the Scripture, and my Unwillingness to Deny You any thing. But if you will give me leave to Acquaint You with the Considerations

To the Reader.

derations that have hitherto Disswaded me from the Publication of the Papers You Press for, You will I presume rather marvel at my Resolving at last to Comply with Your Desires, than that I have been somewhat long Contesting, before I could take up so Oppos'd a Resolution. First then, the Treatise of which the Papers You Desire make a Part, was Written nine or ten Years ago, when my Green Youth made me very Unripe for a Task of that Nature; whose Difficulty Requires, as well as its Worth Deserves, that it should be handl'd by a Person in whom Nature, Education, and Time have happily Match'd a Senile Maturity of Judgment with a Youthful Vigour of Phantasie. Next, the Discourse I have mention'd, being Written to a Private Friend who put me upon that Task, I not onely had a Theme of Another's Choosing Impos'd upon me, for which he was pleas'd to think me much more Fit than I had reason to think myself, but was by the Freedom allowable among Friends tempted to vent and expresse my Thoughts with more Negligence, than were proper to be made use of in a Solemn Discourse intended for Publick View. The contrary of which were yet very requisite for a Person, who though he have by I know not what Unhappy Fate, been cast upon the learning Divers Languages, has yet too great a Concern for the Knowledge of Things to be a diligent or sollicitous Considerer of Words; and so was more fit to write almost of any thing, than of a Style, or of Matters Rhetorical;

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Besides, that my Essay touching the Scripture, having not been all Written in one Countrey, but partly in England, partly in Another Kingdom, and partly too on Ship-board, 'twere strange if in what I Writ, there did not appear much of Unevenness, and if it did not Betray the Unleisuredness, and Relish of the Unsettledness of the Wandering Author; who by thus rambling, was reduc'd for Want of a Library to comply with the Request of his Friend, who was more desirous to receive from the Author, Apples and Pears growing in his own Orchard, than Oranges and Lemons fetch'd from foreign Parts: whereby I was condemn'd not to Enrich my Discourse with what I might have Borrow'd of Real and Valuable from the Eloquent Composures of more happy Pens. But these, Sir, are not all the Determents that Oppos'd my Obeying You; For besides these Disadvantages with which the Discourse it self was Written; that Part of it You demand must appear with a Peculiar as well as Great Disadvantage: for in an Entire and Continu'd Discourse the several Parts that compose it, do mutually afford Light and Confirmation to each other: And therefore, though whatsoever I here present You touching the Style of the Scripture had been Written altogether in some One place of the Discourse, whereof it makes a Part; Yet I could not Dismember it from the rest without a great deal of Injury, as well to It, as to the rest of the Treatise. But this is not the Worst of my Case; For though I did in

To the Reader.

One part of my Essay of the Scripture more Professedly apply my self to the Consideration of its Style; yet, because divers things were Intermoven even in this distinct Part, which were not so fit for Publick View; And because that in divers of the other Parts of my Essay, I had here and there frequently enough, Occasion to say something of the Same Theme, I have been Oblig'd, that I might Obey You, not onely to Dismember, but to Mangle the Treatise You perus'd, cutting out with a Pair of Scizzers here a whole side, there half, and in another place perhaps a Quarter of one, as I found in the other parts of my Discourse, Longer or Shorter Passages, that appear'd to relate to the Style of the Scripture, that I might give you at once All those Parts of my Essay, which seem'd to concern that Subject. And though I have here and there by Dictating to an Amanuensis inserted some Lines or Words, to make the loose Papers less Incoherent, where I thought it easie to be done, yet in many others I have onely prefix'd a short black Line, to the Incoherent Passages, if I found they could not be connected with those whereunto I have joyn'd them, without such Circumlocution as either the Narrowness of the Paper would not permit, or my present Distractions (which you know are not a Few) and the Weakness of my Eyes would not allow of. For to compleat my Unfitness to obey You with any thing of Accurateness, I must to obey you at all, do it, both when I have other Composures in the Press, and when

To the Reader.

when the Distemper in my Eyes makes me so far from Daring to Transcribe the Papers I send You, that I might Alter them according to the Exigency of Your Design in them, that I durst not so much as read them over but with Anothers Eyes. To which I must add, that besides all these Disadvantages I have already mentioned, I cannot but foretell that the following Discourse may prove obnoxious to the Censures of differing sorts of Readers, and particularly to those of Courtiers, for too Neglected, and those of Criticks, for too Spruce a Dress. By all which I presume You will be easily induc'd to believe with me, that I cannot Expose the Papers You desire so much to their Disadvantage and my Own, without some Exercise of Self-Denial: Since without needing much Foresight I may well Apprehend, that I shall hereby hazard the Loss of the most Part of whatever little Reputation in this Nature any of my former Moral or Devout Composures may among Favourable Readers have procur'd me.

But by this time, Sir, I suppose not only that You have left Wondering at my making some Difficulty to put the Annexed Papers into Your hands, but that I owe You and my other Friends an Account why I now Consent to a Compliance with Desires which such Powerful Considerations would dissuade my Assenting to.

My first Inducement then to what I do, is the favourable Character that You, and some other very

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Competent Judges have been pleas'd to give me of these Papers, and especially Your thereupon pressing the ir Publication upon me as a Duty whereto I stand oblig'd to those Many Readers whom you would have me think likely to be Benefited thereby. For in such Cases where Knowing and Sober Persons think there is a great Probability of a Discourse doing Good, it is not impossible but that an Unwillingness to have it Publish'd, may not so much proceed out of Modesty, as from some Secret Pride, almost as unjustifiable, as if a Physitian should refuse to come abroad upon an Urgent Occasion, because he has not his Best Cloaths on, or is not Carefully Dress'd. And therefore when I incline to make with you a Case of Conscience of the Matter, I think my self Oblig'd, whatever my Private Apprehensions may be of the Success, to do my Duty, and leave Events to the Wise and Sovereign Disposer of them. 'Tis not, that I have the Vanity to expect that I shall convert Obstinate and Resolv'd Cavillers, nor much Instruct the Great Clerks: But since I have not yet met with such a Discourse as I intended mine to be; And since the greater part of the things I have written in it will not perhaps be elsewhere met with; I hope that what I have said, may not be Useless to those who have consider'd the Subject I Treat of Less attentively than I have done, and may, if not Procure a Veneration for the Scripture in those that are Altogether Indispos'd to it, yet at least Increase, or Confirm it in those that have already

To the Reader.

ready entertain'd it; and furnish such Devout Persons with something to Alledge on the Scriptures Behalf, who are better furnish'd with Affections than with Arguments for it. And I the Less Scruple to allow my self such a Hope, because you have been pleas'd to make not onely to Me, but to Others such a Mention of the following Papers, that after Your Preference of them to the other Pieces of Devotion You have yet seen of mine (without excepting that Discourse of Seraphick Love, which yet has had the luck to be so favourably Entertain'd by Readers of all sorts,) I shall confess to You, that as Some of them do now appear very much Dislocated and Mangl'd, so Others were Penn'd with more Care than any other of my Writings about Matters Theological. And indeed I conceiv'd my self Oblig'd, in point of Gratitude as well as Duty, to speak as Advantageously as I could of the Scripture, because if I may without Vanity make such an Acknowledgment, I am sensible I have been Benefited by it, and might have been much more so, if I had been as dispos'd to Learn as the matchless Book is qualifi'd to Teach: And I Confess to You also, that since the Physiological Writings I have been induc'd to publish of late, and the sort of Studies to which (for Reasons to be told You at a fitter Opportunity) I seem at present to be wholly addic'ted to, make many look upon me as a Naturalist. And since some Persons, as well Phylosophers as Physicians, have either Faultily, or at least indiscreetly given many

To the Reader.

Men occasion to think that those that being speculatively Studios of Natures Mysteries, depart, as I often do, from the vulgar Peripatetick Philosophy, and especially if they seem to favour that which explicates the Phænomena of Nature by Atoms, are inclin'd to Atheism, or at least to an unconcern'dness for any Particular Religion. Since I say these things are so, I was not unwilling to lay hold of this Opportunity to give a publick Testimony, whereby such as do not know me may be Satisfied, (For I presume all that do know me are so,) that, if I be a Naturalist, 'tis possible to be so, without being an Atheist, or of Kin to it. And that the Study of the Works of Nature has not made me either Disbelieve the Author of them, or Deny his Providence, or so much as Disesteem his Word, which Deserves our Respect upon several Accounts, and especially that of its being the Grand Instrument of Conveying to us the Truths and Mysteries of the Christian Religion. My Embracing of which I know not why I should be Asham'd to own, since I think I can to a Competent & Unpreposess'd Judge give a Rational Account of my so doing.

To all this I might subjoyn some Apologies, which might perhaps serve to Prevent, or withdraw the Censures of some sorts of Readers.

For to Criticks and Philologers I could represent, Partly, that I have not a little Impoverish'd my Discourse by making use of Books to shun the Repetition of what I found Obvious already. Partly, that when I wrote the Essay of which the ensuing Treatise is a

Piece,

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Piece, I had thoughts of annexing to it Annotati-
ons, wherein I hop'd to Illustrate, and by particular
Instances to Exemplific, divers of those things which
should appear to require it; or which else the Rea-
der might suspect I have Slightly consider'd, because
I seem to make but a Transient Mention of them.
And partly too that I ignor'd not the stricter Inter-
pretations given by Modern Criticks to divers
Texts by me alledg'd, but that (not having Op-
portunity to Criticize) I was content to use them in
their Receiv'd, or Obvious sense: and have some-
times Employ'd them but by way of Allusion, or as
Arguments Ad hominem (wherein some of my
Readers are like to Acquiesce, though I do not)
and sometimes rather us'd them to Express than
Prove my Thoughts. And indeed in these Popular
Discourses which are not Written. For, nor to be Ex-
amin'd As, Regular Disputations, Men use not so
much to look whether Every thing be a strict Truth;
as whether it be Proper to perswade or impress the
Truths they would inculcate: and especially in Com-
posures of the Nature of this of Mine, Men have
been rarely censur'd for being sometimes even In-
dulgent to the Exigencies of their Themes. Those
that require more of Method than they will here
find, may be Advertis'd that much of this Scrib-
ble being design'd to serve Particular Acquaintan-
ces of Mine, 'twas fit it should insist on those Points
They were Concern'd in: and that (consequently)
much of the Seeming Desultoriness of my Method,

To the Reader.

and Frequency of my Rambling Excursions have been but Intentional & Charitable Digressions out of my Way, to bring some wandring Friends into theirs, and may Closely enough pursue my Intentions, even when they seem most to deviate from my Theme. And as for the Longer Excursions which either You, or other Judicious Friends would needs have me leave here, and there, I have for the Ease of my Persuaders Annex'd to them some Marks whereby they may betaken Notice of to be Digressions, that as I Submit to their Judgment, who think they may be Useful to some Readers, so I may Comply with my own Unwillingness, to let them be Troublesome to others; who by this means have an Opportunity to Pass by if they please such as they shall not expect to find themselves (either upon their Own score, or that of their Acquaintances) Concern'd in. To those of the Wits, who hapning to be Disregarders of the Scripture may find themselves upon that Account us'd here with any shew of Slighting or Asperity, I may add to what I have already said in the Papers themselves, that, It hath been, but as we Pinch, and cast cold Water on the Faces of Persons in a Swoon, to bring them out of it to themselves again: I having done it with as harmless Intentions, as those of the Angel Acts 12. 7. &c. (mention'd in the Acts) when he struck Peter on the side, not to Hurt him, but to Awake him, Lead him the way out of the Prison he was bound in, and Rescue him from Imminent Death. And if that will not satisfie some of the Least Judicious, or

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To the Reader.

the Most Desperate (For others I expect to find Better Affected or More Moderate) I am willing to leave the Intelligent and Pious to Judge between us; assuring those that are so much more jealous of their own Honour than of Gods, that as I Write to Reclaim them, not to Deprive them of the Repute of Wits, or Share it with them, so I shall not over-much Deplore the being by them Deny'd a Title, to which I have as little Pretension as Right. And (to dispatch) I might add, That Orators may not unjustly bear with some Rudenesses in the Style of a Person that Professes not Rhetorick, and Writes of a Subject that needs Few of her Ornaments, and Rejects Many, as Indecencies misbecoming its Majesty: and that Severer Divines may safely Pardon some Smoothness in a Discourse Written Chiefly for Gentlemen, who would scarce be fond of Truth in every Dress, by a Gentleman who fear'd it might misbecome a Person of his Youth and Quality Studiously to Decline a fashionable Style. And if any Divine should Censure me for Intruding upon his Profession, and handling my Subject Less skilfully than he would have done; I will not Urge that to Write Well on this Subject is a Task, which he that shall try, will perhaps find far Less easie than one would imagine; but I shall rather tell him, that I hope I may obtain his Pardon, by assuring him, that I shall be as little angry to be Rectifi'd in my Mistakes, as to be shown the Way when I am Out of it, and as little trou-

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To the Reader.

bl'd to have this Discourse, that but skirmishes with Laziness and Prophaneness, Surpass'd by another on the Same Subject, as to see another Embracer of the same Quarrel come in with a fresh Regiment, to assist me against a Formidable Enemy in a Conflict I were Engag'd in but with a Troop, or bring Cannon against a Fortrefs, I had but Sakers to Batter with. Yes, I shall be glad if my dim short-liv'd Match but serve to light anothers Brighter Torch, and shall think it a Happiness, to have Contributed, though but thus Occasionally, towards the Elucidation, or Splendour of the Scripture, And consonantly to this Temper I would beseech any Reader, that may so much Want Learning as to need such a Request, not to Measure what can be said in the Defence and Celebration of the Scriptures Style, by what hath in the Following Discourse been Trac'd by the callow Pen of a Travelling Layman. For I profess Ingeuoulsly, that there can as little be an Unwelcomer as an Unjuster Complement plac'd upon me, than to mistake any thing that I am Able to say, and much less what I Have said for the Best that can be said upon such a Subject. Nor is it my least Encouragement to consent to the Publication of such Incompleat Writings, that the Considerations already Intimated will Probably keep my Readers from doing the Scripture, and their own Judgment, so great an Injury.

But I see I have so far Transgress'd the Bounds of a Letter, that if I add any thing more of Apology,
it

To the Reader.

it must be for having been so Prolix already. Wherefore there scarce remains any thing for me, but to Mind You, that since your Perswasions have so much Contributed to my Exposing the following Tract, Incompleat as it is, Your own credit is somewhat concern'd in it as well as Mine. And therefore I hope You will have a care that there be no Faults of the Printer added to those of the Author, which do so little need Additional Blemishes. And especially that there pass no Mistakes of the Punctuation. For in such Composures as this, if the Stops be Omitted, or Misplac'd, it does not onely Lessen the Gracefulness of what is said, but oftentimes quite Spoil the Sense. And if by this Care of Yours (which Your Affection, both for the Subject, and the Writer makes me Confident of) and by the Authority of Your Approbation, I find these Imperfect Considerations to be so Favourably receiv'd as to deserve Another Edition; it will perhaps invite me to put them forth Enlarg'd, and Recruited with what I may meet with pertinent to their Subject in such other Papers of mine Concerning the Scripture, as I had not yet the Conveniency to get into mine own hands and look over. However, though I pretend not here to Answer all Objections against the Style of the Scripture; yet, as I hope, I have been so happy as to Answer Some of them, and Weaken Most of the rest: So if others that are More able will but Employ themselves as Earnestly in so Useful a Work, there is great hope that some Answering this Objection, another
that,

To the Reader.

that, and a third another, they may at length be all of them Satisfactorily reply'd to. And in the mean time I shall think my Labour Richly Recompenc'd, if they either Procure, or Establish a Veneration for the Scripture in any of my Readers, or do at least Encourage those that are qualify'd for a far more prosperous making such an Attempt, to Undertake it, by showing those of them that Know me, what were Easy for Them to do, whilst they see what has been done even by me, whom sure they will not think to be Half so much an Orator, as I hope so uneasy a Proof of his Obedience will make You think him.

Sir,

Your Affectionate Friend

and humble Servant

ROBERT BOYLE.

SOME



SOME
CONSIDERATIONS

Touching the

STYLE

Of the

SCRIPTURES.



These things, Dear Theophilus, being thus dispatch'd, I suppose we may now seasonably proceed to consider the *Style* of the *Scripture*: A Subject that will as well require as deserve some Time and much Attention; in regard that diverse witty men who freely acknowledge the Authority of the Scripture take exceptions at it's Style, and by those and their own Reputation divert many from studying, or so much as perusing, those Sacred Writings; thereby at once giving men injurious and irreverent thoughts of it, and

and diverting them from allowing the Scripture the best way of justifying it self, and disabusing them. Than which scarce any thing can be more prejudicial to a Book that needs but to be sufficiently understood to be highly venerated. The writings these men criminate, and would keep others from reading, being like that Honey which

1 Sam. 14.
v. 27, 29.

Saul's rash Adjuration withheld the *Israelites* from eating, which being tasted, not only Gratified the taste, but Enlightned the eyes.

Now those allegations against the Scripture we are to examine being but too various, it will be requisite for us, to consider the Style of it not in the stricter acception, wherein an Authors style is wont to signifie the choice and disposition of his words, but in that larger sense, wherein the word Style comprehends not only the Phraseology, the Tropes and Figures made use of by a Writer, but his Method, his lofty or humbler Character (as Orators speak) his Pathetical or languid, his close or incoherent way of writing, and in a word, almost all the whole manner of an Author's expressing himself.

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Wherefore, though the Title of an Essay prefixed to this Treatise will I presume invite you to expect from me rather some loose considerations than any full and Methodical discourse concerning the Style of the Scripture, yet I hope you will not think it strange if so comprehensive a Theme make this part of the Essay disproportionate to the others: especially since the nature of your commands and that of my design oblige me to interweave some other things with those that more directly regard the Style of the Scripture, and particularly to lay hold on all opportunities I can discreetly take to invite you to study much and highly to esteem a Book, which there is no danger you can too much study, or esteem too highly.

It has been a comon saying among the Antients, that even *Jupiter* could not please all. But by the Objections I meet with against the Scripture, I find that the true God himself is not free from the Imputation of his audacious Creatures, who impiously presume to quarrel as well with his Revelations as his Providence, and express no more reverence to what he hath dictated than to what he doth.

cloth. For not now to mention what is by Atheists and Antiscripturists alledged to overthrow the Truth and Authority of the Scripture (because it is not here, but elsewhere, that we are to deal with that sort of men) even by some of those that Acknowledge both (for with such onely we have now to reason) there are I know not how many faults found with the Style of the Scripture. For some of them are pleased to say that Book is too obscure, others, that 'tis immethodical, others, that it is contradictory to it self, others, that the neighbouring parts of it are incoherent, others, that 'tis unadorned, others, that it is flat and unaffecting, others, that it abounds with things that are either trivial or impertinent, and also with useles Repetitions. And indeed so many and so various are the faults and imperfections imputed by these men to the Scripture, that my wonder at them would be almost as great as is my trouble, if I did not consider how much it is the Interest of the great Adversary of mankind, and especially of (that choicest part of it) the Church, to depreciate composures that if duly Reverenced would prove so destructive

structive to his Kingdome and Designs; and if I did not also Remember that (such is the querulous and exceptionous nature of men) 'Twas *Cicero* himself that observed, *Vitari non posse Reprehensionem nisi nihil scribendo*. But as Poets and Astronomers have fancied among the Celestial Lights that adorn the Firmament, Bears, Bulls, Goats, Doggs, Scorpions, and other beasts; so our Adversaries impute I know not what Imaginary deformities to a Book ennobled by it's Author with many Celestial Lights, fit to instruct the World, and discover to them the wayes of Truth and Blessedness. Although I say this be so, yet since the mis-representation made by these men of the Bible is not inferiour to that made by Poets and Cosmographers of the Firmament, I hope you will be as little deterred by the most disparaging Imputations from studying the Scripture, as Pilots are by the Name of a Bear given to the most Northern Constellation, from having their eyes upon the Pole-starr, and steering their courses by it.

And since you will easily believe that a Person so averse from wrangling as I,

is not like to make the disputing with these Censurers of the Scripture-Style any further his design than as the invalidating their Objections conduces to the Reputation of that Sacred Book, I presume you will not think it at all impertinent, if oftentimes I intermix with those things that more directly regard such Objections, other things that seem to tend rather to celebrate than vindicate the Scripture: for in so doing, I hope I shall not alone considerably, though not perhaps so directly, strengthen my answers, by shewing that we justly ascribe to the Scripture Qualities quite opposite to the imperfections imputed to it; but I shall perfectly comply with my main design, which I here declare once for all, is but to engage you to study and value the Scripture, and therefore obliges me to answer Objections onely so far forth as they may look like arguments to disswade you from prizing and studying it. And because I find not that the Objections to be considered have any great coherence with or dependence on each other, I shall not scruple to mention them, and my Reflections on them, in no other order than that wherein

wherein they shall chance to occur to my thoughts whilst I am writing.

Of the considerations then that I am to lay before you, there are three or four which are of a more general nature, and therefore being such as may each of them be pertinently employed against several of the exceptions taken at the Scriptures style, it will not be inconvenient to mention them before the rest.

And in the first place it should be considered, that those Cavillers at the style of the Scripture that you and I have hitherto met with, do (for want of skill in the Original) especially in the *Hebrew*, judge of it by the Translations wherein alone they read it. Now scarce any but a Linguist will imagine how much a Book may lose of its elegance, by being read in another tongue than that it was written in, especially if the Languages from which and into which the Version is made, be so very differing, as are those of the Eastern and these Western parts of the world. But of this I foresee an occasion of saying something hereafter, yet at present I must observe to you, that the style of the Scripture is much more disad-

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vantaged, than that of other Books, by being judged of by Translations. For the Religious and just veneration that the Interpreters of the Bible have had for that Sacred Book, has made them in most places render the *Hebrew* and *Greek* passages so scrupulously word for word, that for fear of not keeping close enough to the sense, they usually care not how much they lose of the Eloquence of the passages they Translate. So that whereas in those Versions of other Books that are made by good Linguists, the Interpreters are wont to take the liberty to recede from the Author's words, and also substitute other Phrases instead of his, that they may express his meaning without injuring his Reputation: in translating the Old Testament Interpreters have not put *Hebrew* Phrases into *Latin* or *English* Phrases, but only into *Latin* or *English* words, and have too often besides, by not sufficiently understanding, or at least considering, the various significations of Words, Particles and Tenses in the Holy Tongue, made many things appear less coherent, or less rational, or less considerable, which by a more free and skilfull rendring of the

the Original would not be blemished by any appearance of such imperfection. And though this fault of Interpreters be pardonable enough in them, as carrying much of it's Excuse in it's Cause, yet it cannot but much derogate from the Scripture to appear with peculiar disadvantages, besides those many that are common to almost all Books by being Translated.

For whereas the Figures of Rhetorick are wont by Orators to be reduced to two Comprehensive sorts, and one of those does so depend upon the sound and placing of the words (whence the *Greek* Rhetoricians call such Figures *ῥήματα λέξεως*) that if they be alter'd, though the sense be retained, the figure may vanish; this sort of figures I say, which comprises those that Orators call *Epanados*, *Antanaclassis*, and a multitude of others, are wont to be lost in such literal Translations as are ours of the Bible, as I could easily shew by many instances, if I thought it Requisite.

Besides, there are in *Hebrew*, as in other Languages, certain appropriated Graces and a peculiar Emphasis belonging to some expressions, which must necessarily be impaired by any

Translation, and are but too often quite lost in those that adhere too scrupulously to the words of the Original. And as in a lovely face, though a Painter may well enough express the cheeks and the nose and lipps, yet there is often something of splendor and vivacity in the Eyes which no Pencil can reach to equal: so in some choice Composures, though a skilful Interpreter may happily enough render into his own Language a great part of what he translates, yet there may well be some shining passages, some sparkling and Emphatical expressions that he cannot possibly represent to the life. And this consideration is more applicable to the Bible and it's Translations, than to other Books, for two particular Reasons.

For first, it is more difficult to translate the *Hebrew* of the Old Testament, than if that Book were written in *Syriack* or *Arabick*, or some such other Eastern Language. Not that the Holy Tongue is much more difficult to be learned than others, but because in the other learned Tongues we know there are commonly variety of Books extant, whereby we may learn the various significations

nifications of Words and Phrases; whereas the pure *Hebrew* being unhappily lost, except so much of it as remains in the Old Testament, out of whose Books alone we can but very imperfectly frame a Dictionary and a Language, there are many words, especially the *Ἀπαξ λεγόμενα* and those that occur but seldom, of which we know but that one Signification, or those few Acceptions wherein we find it us'd in those Texts that we think we clearly understand: whereas if we consider the nature of the Primitive tongue, whose words being not numerous, are most of them Equivocal enough, and do many of them abound with strangely-different meanings; and if we consider too how likely it is that the Numerous Conquests of *David*, and the Wisdom, Prosperity, Fleets, and various Commerces of his son *Salomon* did both enrich and spread the *Hebrew* Language, it cannot but seem very probable, that the same Word or Phrase may have had divers other significations than Interpreters have taken notice of, or we are now aware of, since we find in the *Chaldee*, *Syriack*, *Arabick*, and other Eastern

Tongues, that the *Hebrew* words and Phrases (a little varied, according to the nature of those Dialects) have other, and oftentimes very differing significations besides those that the modern Interpreters of the Bible have ascribed to them. I say the Modern, because the Antient Versions before, or not long after our Saviour's time, and especially that which we vulgarly call the *Septuagint's*, do frequently favour our conjecture, by rendring *Hebrew* Words and Phrases to senses very distant from those more received significations in our Texts, when there appears no other so probable reason of their so rendring them, as their believing them capable of significations differing enough from those to which our later Interpreters have thought fit to confine themselves. The use that I would make of this Consideration may easily be conjectured, namely, that 'tis probable that many of those texts whose expressions, as they are rendred in our Translations, seem flat, or improper, or incoherent with the context, would appear much otherwise, if we were acquainted with all the significations of Words and Phrases that

that were known in the times when the *Hebrew* Language flourished, and the Sacred Books were written: It being very likely, that among those various significations some one or other would afford a better sense and a more significant & sinewy expression than we meet with in our Translations, and perhaps would make such passages as seem flat or uncouth appear Eloquent and Emphatical. Whilst I am writing this, our *English* Tongue presents to my thoughts an Example which may seem to illustrate much of the foregoing Consideration: and it is this; That though, as one would easily believe, there are but a few forms of speaking which relate to the Birth of Infants, yet there are five or six expressions concerning that one affair, wherein very peculiar and unwonted notions belong to the Words & Phrases. For if I say that such a Woman has looked every hour these 10 days, That yesterday she cried out, That she had a quick & easy labour, That last night she was brought a bed, That now she lyes in, and that it is fit we should remember the Lady in the straw; if, I say, I make use of any or all of these expressions, an *English*

man would readily understand me; but if I should literally and word for word translate them, I say not into *Greek* or *Hebrew*, but into the Languages of our neighbour Nations, *French* or *Italian*, men would not understand what I mean: and if a discourse wherein they were employed were translated by an Interpreter only acquainted with the genuine and more obvious signification of the *English* word, it would in such passages appear very disadvantageously, and perhaps be thought impertinent or non-sensical to a *French* or *Italian* Reader.

But this is not all; for I consider in the second place, that not only we have lost diverse of the significations of many of the *Hebrew* Words and Phrases, but that we have also lost the means of acquainting our selves with a multitude of particulars relating to the Topography, History, Rites, Opinions, Factions, Customs, &c. of the Antient Jews and neighbouring Nations, without the knowledge of which we cannot in the perusing of Books of such Antiquity as those of the Old Testament, and written by and (principally) for Jews, we cannot I say but lose
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very much of that esteem, delight and relish with which we should read very many passages if we discerned the References and Allusions that are made in them to those Stories, Proverbs, Opinions, &c. to which such passages may well be supposed to Relate. And this Conjecture will not I presume appear irrational, if you but consider how many of the handsomest passages in *Juvenal*, *Perfius*, *Martial* and diverse other Latine Writers (not to mention *Hesiod*, *Museus*, or other antienter Greeks) are lost to such Readers as are unacquainted with the *Roman* Customs, Government and Stories, nay or are not sufficiently informed of a great many particular circumstances relating to the condition of those times, and of diverse particular persons pointed at in those Poems; and therefore it is that the later Criticks have been fain to write Comments or at least Notes upon every Page, and in some Pages upon almost every Line of those Books, to enable the Reader to discern the Eloquence and Relish the Wit of the Author. And if such Dilucidations be necessary to make us value writings that treat of familiar and secular
affairs,

affairs, and were written in an *European* Language, and in Times and Countries much nearer to ours, how much do you think we must lose of the Elegancy of the Book of *Job*, the Psalms of *David*, the Song of *Salomon*, and other Sacred composures, which not only treat oftentimes of sublime and supernatural Mysteries, but were written in very remote Regions so many Ages ago, amidst Circumstances to most of which we cannot but be great strangers? And thus much for my first general Consideration.

My second is this, That we should carefully distinguish betwixt what the Scripture it self sayes, and what is only said in the Scripture. For we must not look upon the Bible as an Oration of God to men, or as a Body of Lawes, like our English Statute-Book, wherein it is the Legislator that all the way speaks to the people, but as a Collection of composures of very differing sorts, and written at very distant times; and of such composures, that though the Holy Men of God (as *St. Peter* calls them) were acted by the Holy Spirit, who both excited and assisted them

them in Penning the Scripture, yet there are many other besides the Author and the Pen-men introduced speaking there. For besides the Books of *Josuah*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, the four Evangelists, the Acts of the Apostles, and other parts of Scripture that are evidently Historical and wont to be so called, there are in the other Books many passages that deserve the same name, and many others wherein, though they be not meer Narratives of things done, many Sayings and Expressions are recorded that either belong not to the Author of the Scripture, or must be looked upon as such wherein his Secretaries personate others. So that in a considerable part of the Scripture, not onely Prophets and Kings and Priests being introduced speaking, but Souldiers, Shepherds, and Women, and such other sorts of persons from whom witty or eloquent things are not (especially when they speak *extempore*) to be expected, it would be very injurious to impute to the Scripture any want of Eloquence that may be noted in the Expressions of others than it's Author. For though not only in Romances, but in many of those

those that pass for true Histories, the supposed Speakers may be observed to talk as well as the Historian; yet that is but either because the men so introduced were Embassadors, Orators, Generals, or other Eminent men for parts as well as employments, or because the Historian does, as it often happens, give himself the liberty to make Speeches for them, and does not set down what indeed they said, but what he thought fit that such persons on such occasions should have said; whereas the Pen-men of the Scripture, as one of them truly professes, having not followed cunningly-devised Fables in what they have written, have faithfully set down the Sayings as well as Actions they record, without making them rather congruous to the conditions of the Speakers than to the Laws of Truth.

Nor is it onely the style of very many passages of Scripture that may be justified by our second Consideration, but with the same Distinction well applied we may silence some of their malicious Cavils who accuse the Scripture of teaching Vice by the ungodly Sayings and Examples that are here
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and there to be met with in it; But as the Apostle said, that *they are not all Israel that are of Israel*; so may we say, that all is not Scripture that is in the Scripture: for many wicked persons and their perverter Sathan are there introduced, whose Sayings the Holy Ghost does not adopt, but barely registers; nor does the Scripture affirm that what they said was true, but that it is true they said it. And if I had not reduced some of these Cavillers to confess that they never did themselves read those pieces of the Bible at some of whose passages they cavil, I should much more admire than I do to find them fatter as confidently as they do all they hear cited from it upon the Enditer of it, as if the Devils speeches were not recorded there, and as if it were requisite to make a History divinely inspired, that all the Blasphemies and Crimes it registers should be so too. As for the Ills recorded in the Scripture, besides that wicked persons were necessary to exercise Gods Children and illustrate his providence, and besides the Allegations commonly made on that subject, we may consider that there being many things to be declined as well as practi-

practised, 'twas fit we should be taught as well, what to avoid, as what to imitate; and the known rocks and shelves do as well guide the Sea-men as the Pole-star. Now as we could not be armed against the Tempters methods if we ignor'd them; so could we never safelier nor better learn them than in his Book, who can alone discover the wiles and fathom the *depths of Sathan*, and track him through all his windings and (otherwise untraceable) Labyrinths, and in that Book where the Antidote is exhibited with the Poyson, and either mens defeat or victory may teach us at others costs and without our hazard the true art of that warfare we are all so highly concerned in. And as Chymists observe in the Book of Nature, That those Simples that wear the figure or resemblance (by them termed Signature) of a distemper'd part are Medicinal for that part of that Infirmary whose signature they bear; so in God's other Book the Vicious persons there mention'd still prove under some notion or upon some score or other Antidotal against the Vices notorious in them, being (to present it you also in a Scripture Simile) like the Brazen Serpent in the

Rev. 2. 24.

the Wilderness set up to cure the Poyson infused by those they resemble. *Whatsoever things were written aforetimes*, sayes the Apostle, *were written for our Instruction*. And to make further use of our former comparison, those to whom the Scripture gives the names of Lions, Wolves, Foxes, & other Brutes, by Gods assistance prove to his Saints as instructive Beasts as doth the Northern Bear unto the wandring Pilot: and as Antiently God fed his Servant sometimes by an Angel, sometimes by a Woman, and sometimes too by Ravens; so doth he make all persons in the Bible, whether good or bad or indifferent, supply his servants with that instruction which is the Aliment of Vertue and of Souls, and makes them and their examples contribute to the verification of that passage of Saint Paul, wherein he sayes that *all things co-operate for good to them that love God*.

Rom. 15. 4.

Rom. 8. 28.

My third Consideration is this, That the several Books of the Bible were written chiefly and primarily to those to whom they were first adresed, and to their contemporaries, and that yet the Bible not being written for one

one Age or People only, but for the whole people of God, consisting of persons of all Ages, Nations, Sexes, Complexions and Conditions, it was fit it should be written in such a way as that none of all these might be quite excluded from the advantages designed them in it. Therefore were these Sacred Books so wisely as well as graciously temper'd, that their Variety so comprehends the several abilities and dispositions of men, that (as some Pictures seem to have their eyes directly fix'd on every one that looks on them from what part soever of the room he eyes them) there is scarce any frame of spirit a man can be of, or any condition he can be in, to which some passage of Scripture is not as partly applicable as if it were meant for him, or

2 Sam. 12.
v. 7.

said to him, as *Nathan* once did to *David*, *Thou art the man*. What has been thus observed touching God's design in the contrivance of the Scripture, may assist us to defend the style of a great multitude of it's Texts, and particularly of diverse of those which belong to the five following kinds.

And

And first, the several Books that make up the Canon of the Scripture being primarily designed for their use that lived in the times wherein they were divulged, it need be no wonder if each of them contain many things that principally concern the persons that then lived, & be accordingly written in such a way that many of it's passages allude and otherwise relate to particular Times, Places, Persons, Customes, Opinions, Stories, &c. which by our formerly mentioned want of a good account of such remote Ages and Regions cannot afford us that instruction and satisfaction that those to whom such Books were immediately addressed might easily derive from the perusal of them.

Next, as some portions of Scripture were principally designed for ages very long since past, so some other parts of it, especially those that are yet Prophetick, may probably respect future times much more than ours: and our Posterity may admire what we cannot now relish, because we do not yet understand it. Moreover there being many portions of Scripture, as almost the whole four last Books of *Moses*, where-

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in God is introduced as either immediately or mediately giving Laws to his people or his worshippers, I suppose it will not be thought necessary that such parts of Scripture should be Eloquently written, and that the Supreme Legislator of the World, who reckons the greatest Kings amongst his Subjects, should in giving Laws tie himself to those of Rhetorick, the scrupulous observation of which would much derogate from those two Qualities so considerable in Laws, Clearness and Majesty.

Besides, there being a sort of men, of which I hope the number will daily encrease, who have such a desire as St. *Peter* tells us the Angels themselves cherish, to look into the Mysteries of Religion, and are qualified with elevated and comprehensive Intellects to apprehend them in some measure, it is not unfit that to exercise such mens abilities, and to reward their industry, there should be some abstruse Texts of Scripture fitted to the capacities of such speculative wits, and above the reach of vulgar Apprehensions.

And on the other side, the Omniscient Author of the Scripture foreseeing

seeing that it would follow from the condition of mankind that the greatest part of the members of the Church would be no great Clerks, and many of them very weak or illiterate, it was but suitable to his goodness that a great many other passages of the Books designed for them as well as others, should be written in such a plain and familiar way as may besit such Readers, and let them see that they were not forgotten or over-looked by him who truly sayes by the Prophet that all Souls are his. And yet in many even of these Texts which seem chiefly to have been designed to teach the simple, Scholars themselves may find much to learn. For not onely there are some passages that contain milk for Babes, and others that exhibit strong meat for riper stomachs, but oftentimes (as Cows afford both milk and beef) the same Texts that Babes may suck milk from, strong men may find strong meat in: The Scripture it self in some sense fulfilling the promise made us in it, that *Habenti dabitur* (to him that hath shall be given,) and being like a fire that serves most men but to warm, and dry themselves, and dress their meat,

Ezech. 18.
4.

but serves the skilful Chymist to draw Quintessences and make Extracts.

I doubt not but you are acquainted as well as I with divers querulous Readers, who very boldly find fault with this variety wherein God hath thought fit to exhibit his Truth and declare his Will in Holy Writ, and presume to censure some Texts as too mysterious, very many as too plain. But these exceptions at the Oeconomy of the Scripture do commonly proceed from their Pride that make them; for that vice inclining them to fancy that the Bible either was or ought to have been written purposely for them, prompts them to make exceptions suitable to such a presumption, and whilst they look upon their own abilities as the measure of all discourses, to call all that transcends their apprehensions Dark, and all that equals it not Trivial. They will be always finding fault with the Holy Ghosts expressions, both where his condescensions make them clear, and where the sublimity of the matter leaves them obscure; like Batts, whose tender eyes love neither day nor night, and are only pleased with (what is alone pro-

portioned

portioned to their weak sight) a Twilight that is both or neither. But as a skilful Fowler (and the comparison will be excused by those that remember that God in Scripture is said to be pressed as a *Cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*, and the Son of Man to be as a *Thief in the night*) according to the differing natures of his game, so contrives and appropriates his stratagems, that some he catches with light (as Larks with day-nets) some with baits (as Pigeons with Pease) some with frights (as Black-birds with a Sparrow-Hawk or a Low-bell) and some he draws in with company (as Ducks and such like sociable Birds with decoy-Fowl:) so God knowing that some persons must be wrought upon by Reason, others allured by Interest, some driven in by Terrour, and others again brought in by Imitation, hath by a rare and merciful (if I may so call it) suppleness of wisdom so varied the Heavenly Doctrine into Ratiocinations, Mysteries, Promises, Threats and Examples, that there is not any sort of people that in the Scripture may not find Religion represented in that form they are most disposed to receive im-

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Amos 1
13.

pressions from ; God therein graciously dealing with his Children not unlike
 2 King. 4. the Prophet that shrunk himself into
 34. the proportion of the Child he meant to revive. The *geniuses*, the capacities and the dispositions of men are so distinct, and oftentimes so extravagant, that there is scarce a passage of Scripture that is not suitable or appropriate to some of those numberless differences of humour the Bible was designed for, and in that unimaginable variety of occurrences shared amongst such vast multitudes finds not a proper object. And therefore God who (having created them) best knows the frame of mens spirits, having been pleased to match them with proper Texts, I shall not quarrel with his vouchsafing to lisp mysteries to those that would be deterred by any other way of expressing them, and to qualifie his instruments according to the natures he designs them to work upon, lest he should say to me with the House-holder in the Gospel, *Is thine eye Evil, because I am Good?* And sure it must extremely misbecome us to repine at the greatness of Gods condescensions, only upon the score of a
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Knowledge or Attainments that we owe to it.

By reflecting upon the three foregoing general Considerations, you will, I presume, easily perceive what it is that is pretended to in what I represent to you in the behalf of the style of the Scripture. For you will easily guess by what I have hitherto told you, I pretend not to prove or assert that every Text of Scripture, especially in translations, is embellished with the Ornaments of Rhetorick, but only to shew these two things, the one, That as there may be drawn from divers things in the Scripture it self (without excluding the style) considerable Arguments of it's having been written or approved by men peculiarly assisted by the Spirit of God; so if a man be perswaded either by these intrinsick Arguments (which I may in another paper evince to be no slight ones) or by any others, of the Heavenly Origination of the Scripture, if, I say, a man be perswaded of this, he ought not in reason by the style of these Books to be kept from diligently studying of them, and highly valuing them. The other (which I add as one evincement of the former) is,

that not only the Scripture is every where written with as much eloquence as the chief Author (whose Omniscience qualified him to judge best in the case) thought fit and expedient for his wise ends in publishing it, but that, as we now have the Sacred Books, especially in their Originals, very many passages of them are so far from being destitute of what even our Western Nations count Eloquence, that they deserve to be Admired for it. And, *Theophilus*, if you please to keep in your eye what I have now told you concerning my Scope in writing, and to bear in your memory the three general Considerations I have premised, I shall need hereafter as often as I have occasion to mention them, only to point at them, and thereby shall excuse you and my self from the unwelcome trouble of many times repeating the same things.

To proceed then to the more particular Objections against the Scripture. The first I shall consider is, That it is obscure. And this I find alledged by two sort of men to two differing purposes; some endeavouring by it to disgrace the Bible, and others only making

making the pretended darkness of many of its passages an Excuse for their not studying it.

To the first sort of objectors I answer, that it is little less than inevitable that many passages of the Scripture should seem obscure to us, and that it is but fit that divers others should be so too.

For first, the Objectors, as I formerly observed, reading the Bible but in Translations, are destitute of those helps to understand the sense of many Passages that may be afforded by skill in the Original Languages. Besides, that even to those that have taken pains to understand the Original Tongues, the Genuine sense of divers words and Phrases is denied by the injury of time, through which (as was already noted) a greater part of the *Hebrew* and *Chaldean* Tongues have been lost.

Secondly, Many Texts appear obscure to those that live in these latter times, onely because that by reason of the perishing of those Writings and other Monuments of Antiquity that were contemporary to the Books of the Old Testament, we cannot be sufficiently acquainted with the History, the Laws

Laws and Customes of the *Jewes* and other Nations mentioned in the Scripture, so that it need be no wonder if divers Passages of the Books of *Genesis*, *Josuah*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, the *Kings*, *Hester*, & other Historical Books of the Scripture, as also of the four last Books of *Moses*, are obscure to us, and yet might be very intelligible to those in whose times they were written, and for whose use they were principally designed. As although *Lucius Florus* would in many places appear very obscure to such Readers as know nothing of the *Roman* affairs but by the account given of them in his writings (whence diverse late Criticks have been invited to illustrate him out of other Latine Authors) yet questionless to the *Roman* Readers that lived in his time, or not very long after, his Book was easie enough to be understood. How much the want of other Historians contemporary to the Penmen of the *Old Testament* may make things seem obscure that might by such stories be easily cleered up, we may observe from divers Passages of the New Testament, which can scarce be wel understood without an account of *Herod's* family, and the changes that happened about

about our Saviours time in *Judea*, which was sometimes all of it governed by *Herod* the Great that massacred the Children at *Bethlehem*, and sometimes was governed by *Pilate* and other *Roman* Magistrates, and sometimes was so divided that it was as to some parts onely governed by *Herod's* Descendents under various Titles; the want of the Knowledge of which, and of the several Princes that bore the name of *Herod*, does much puzzle many Readers that are Strangers to *Josephus*. And it seems somewhat strange to many, that Christ should in St. *Luke* admonish his Hearers to flye out of *Jerusalem* and *Judea*, and not resort thither from the neighbouring Countries, *when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with Armies*, since those Armies would probably hinder the counselled retirement (at least as to the City.) Whereas he that finds in the Story, that the *Roman* forces under *Gratus* did on a sudden, and (as good Authors tell us) without any manifest Cause withdraw from the siege of *Jerusalem*, and then return to it again, and (under *Titus*) carry the Town by force; he that shall read also in *Euseb. lib. 3. cap. 5.* that

*Luke 21.
v. 21, 22.*

that the Christians of *Jerusalem* did (divinely admonished) make use of the Opportunity presented them to quit all of them the City and retire to *Pella* on the other side of *Jordan*; He, I say, that shall read and take notice of all this, will not only clearly understand the Reasonableness of our Saviours warning, but admire the Prophetick Spirit by which he could give it. And as it is difficult to collect out of the Old Testament alone the History of those times wherein it was written; so it is not to be expected, that out of those Books we should be able to collect and comprehend either compleat Idæas of the Israelitish Government Civil and Ecclesiastical, or the true State of their several Sects, Opinions and affaires in matters of Religion: And yet without the Knowledge of those it cannot be but that many Texts will seem Obscure to us, which were not at all so to them that were coætaneous to the Pen-men of those Books. The Labours of some modern Criticks that have put themselves to the trouble of making a thorough search into the Writings of those Jewish Rabbies that lived about our Saviour's and his Apostles times, have by

by the help of this Rabinical Learning already cleared up divers Texts which before were Dark, because they related to particular Sects, Customs, Sayings or Opinions amongst the then *Jews*, whose knowledge the Writers of the New Testament do not Teach but Suppose. And I doubt not but higher and valuable Attainments in that kind of Learning (how worthless soever I should think it, if it were not conducive to the Illustration of the Scripture) will ere it be very long disperse that Obscurity, which yet dwells upon divers other Texts, and will shew the Groundlessness of all our Cavils at them, as well as that of many of our too fierce contentions about them. I shall add, that I dare almost presume to question, whether even our famousst Criticks have not left divers Mosaical Texts in the dark, if not clouded them by their Comments, meerly for want of knowing the Religion of the antient *Zabians*, in opposition of whose Magical worship and Superstitions, I am apt to think divers Ceremonies of the Ritual Law of the *Jews* to have been instituted. And yet of those *Zabiists* (or

צבאים and *صابی* as the Hebrews

and *Arabians* express the name) I find a deep and general silence in *Classick* Authors, except (the Rabby's Oracle) *Maimonides*, out of whom our great Antiquary (Mr. *Selden*) both in familiar discourse and in his excellent Tract of the *Syrian* Deities gave me first a hint, which by lighting on another Author of those parts I have since had the luck to improve sufficiently, to make me fear, that they that are strangers to the *Zabians* Rites and Creed, will scarce give us the clearest account, the Theme is capable of in divers passages of the *Mosaick* Law: as I am apt to think that our Ignorance or want of taking notice of the Perswasions and Practices of the *Gnosticks*, *Carpocratians*, and the Sects allyed to theirs, if it do not make us mistake and misinterpret, doth at least keep us from giving the clearest Interpretations whereof they are capable to many Passages of the New Testament, wherein they are either clearly Pointed at, or closely Related to.

Thirdly, we may reasonably suppose, that of the Texts that are now difficult unto us, there are divers that are so but because they were principally

pally intended for the use of those that shall live in after-times, by whom they will questionless be better understood. To the *Jews* that lived in and long after *Moses* his time, many of those Predictions both Verbal and Typical of the *Messias* seemed very Dark, which to us Christians are abundantly Illustrated by the rising of that Sun of Righteousness, who was aimed at in them. And though the *Mysterious* Temple and City described in *Ezekiel*, as also much of the *Apocalypse* and divers other Prophetick Passages of Holy Writ do yet seem abstruse to us, yet they will not appear so to those, to whom their Completion (the best expositor of dark Prophecies) shall have unfolded them. For I observe, that as some Divine predictions are clearly expressed, to the intent that those that are made acquainted with them may before-hand know what will happen, so others are proposed, not so much that those, to whom they are first addressed, should know the fore-told events, before they come to pass, as that, when they do come to pass, the same accomplishment, that expounds them, may evince that the Forteller of them

John 26 4.

them was able to Foresee them: according to that of our Saviour to his Disciples, to whom he Prophefied the Sufferings they should undergo, *These things have I told you, that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them.*

Fourthly, it was fit, that there should be some Obscure Passages left in the inspired Volume, to keep those from the Knowledge of some of those Divine Mysteries, that are both delightful and useful, though not absolutely necessary, who do not think such knowledge worth studying for. As it was also fit (which I partly noted above) that there should be some clouded and mysterious Texts, to excite and recompence the Industry and speculation of Elevated wits and Religious Inquirors.

Lastly, there are divers Obscure passages in Scripture, wherein the difficulty lies in the thing it self that is expressed, not in the Scriptures manner of expressing it. For not to mention that obscureness, that is wont to attend Prophetick Raptures (of which there are many mentioned in Scripture) there are divers things, that we agree to be Knowable by the bare light of Nature without

without Revelation, which yet are so uneasie to be satisfactorily understood by our imperfect Intellects, that let them be delivered in the clearest Expressions men can devise, the Notions themselves will yet appear Obscure. Thus in natural Philosophy it self, the Nature of Place and time, the Origine of Motion, and the manner whereby the humane Soul performs her Functions, are things which no Writers delivered so clearly, as not to leave the things somewhat Obscure to Inquisitive and Examining Readers. And shall we then wonder that those Texts of Scripture, that treat of the Nature and Decrees of God, and of such sublime Mysteries as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Influence of the Spirit upon the Soul of man, and such other abstruse things, which it cannot be Reasonably expected that humane words should keep from being hard to be comprehended by humane understandings, should be Obscure to us, especially if we suffer our not understanding their full meaning at first to deter us from endeavouring to find it out by further study? I am sorry I can add on this Occasion, that divers Texts

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are made to appear more dark, than otherways they would, by the Glosses and Interpretations of some, that pretend to expound them. For there are divers subtil men, who being perswaded upon certain Metaphysical Notions they are fond of, or by the Authority of such either Churches or Persons as they highly Reverence, that such or such Niceties are either requisite to the Explication of this or that Doctrine delivered in Scripture, or at least deducible from it, will make bold so to interpret dark Texts (and sometimes even clear ones) that they shall seem to hold forth not only their own sense, but the nice speculations or deductions of him that quotes them: So that divers Texts, which to a Rational and unprepossessed peruser would appear plain enough, seem to contain Inextricable difficulties to those unwary or prejudicate Readers, who are not careful to distinguish betwixt the plain sense of a Text it self, and those Metaphysical subtilties, which witty and interested Persons would father upon it, though oftentimes those Niceties are either so groundless, that though there needs much Wit to devise them, there

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needs but a little Reason to despise them; or so unintelligible, as to tempt a considering man to suspect, that the Proposers either mean not what they speak, or understand not what they say. And I could wish these Metaphysical Querks, with which several not only School-men but other Writers have perplexed the Doctrine of Predestination, of the Trinity, of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the will of man, and some other mysteries of Christian Religion, did not give advantages against those Doctrines to the Opposers of them, and perhaps make some men opposers, who otherwise would not have been so. And I fear, that too great an opportunity has been afforded to Atheistical wits by the unintelligible Phancies, which many have made bold to add to what the Scripture has revealed concerning the Eternity and Infiniteness of God: For whilst men indiscreetly and unskillful twist together as integral parts of the same Doctrine a revealed truth with their own Metaphysical speculations about it, though these be too often such as cannot be proved, or perhaps so much as understood, they tempt

such examining Readers, as are rational enough to discern the groundlessness of one part of the Doctrine, to reject the whole for it's sake. But I fear I have digressed: For my intention was only to intimate, that it is not oftentimes so much what the Scripture says, as what some men perswade others it sayes, that makes it seem obscure; and that as to some other passages that are so indeed, since it is the abstruseness of what is taught in them that makes them almost inevitably so, It is little less sawcy upon such a score to find fault with the style of the Scripture, than to do so with the Author for making us but men.

Thus much being said by way of Answer to the first sort of Objectors of Darkness against the Scripture, it is easie to foresee, that the second sort of them may endeavour to pervert what has been delivered to Apologize for their Neglect of the Scripture, by alleging, that albeit what has been represented may serve to shew that the Obscurity of the Scripture is justifiable, yet the very proving it needfull or fit that it should be obscure, is a plain confession that it is so. Wherefore it is requisite

quisite that I now say something to this sort of Objectors also, who are so unfavourable to the Scripture and themselves, as that, because they cannot understand all of it, they will not endeavour to learn any thing from it. I have already acknowledged it, and shall not now deny, that (as Heaven it self is not all stars) there may be parts of Scripture, whose clear expositions shall enoble and bless the remotest of succeeding ages, and that perhaps some mysteries are so obscure, that they are reserved to the Illumination and Blazes of the last and universal fire.

But here it would be considered in the first place, that those Texts that are so difficult to be understood, are not necessary to be so. In points fundamental and indispensably necessary, the darkness of Scripture is no less partial, then of *Egypt*, which benighted onely the Enemies, but involved not the people of God: in such Articles as these, *If the Gospel be hid, 'tis hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the minds*; At least in relation to such Truths as these we may justly apply that of *Moses*, where he tells Israel, *This Commandment which I*

2 Cor.
3. 4.

Deut. 30.
v. 11, 12,
13, 14.

command thee this day is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. — But the word is very near unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart that thou mayest do it. And surely the Bibles appropriate being (as it self tells us) *to enlighten the eyes, and to make wise the simple*: and it being written for the use of the whole people of God, whereof the greater number are no Clerks, things are there expressed with an Evidence proportionable to the degree of Assent that they exact, and are as far forth intelligible to pious and industrious Readers as they are necessary to be understood by them; and we may not unfitly say of the understanding of those cloudy passages of Scripture, what I remember a Father said of the Sacrament, *That not the wanting it, but the slighting it shall condemn men.* 'Tis our duty to study them, but 'tis not (alwayes) to understand them.

Non pri-
vatio sed
contemptus
damnat.

And as the Knowledge of those Texts that are Obscure, is not Necessary, so those others, whose sense is necessary to be understood, are Easie enough to be so. And those are as much more Numerous than the others, as more Clear. Yes, there are shining

shining passages enough in Scripture to light us the way to Heaven, though some unobvious Stars of that bright Sphere cannot be discerned without the help of a Telescope. Since God then has been pleased to provide sufficiently for our Instruction, what reason have we to repine, if we have in a book, not designed for us alone, provided also for those that are fitted for higher attainments, especially since, if we be not wanting to our selves, those passages that are so obscure as to teach us nothing else, may at least teach us Humility?

Nor does it misbecome God's Goodness any more than his Wisdom, to have so tempered the Canonical Books, as therein to leave all sorts of Readers an Exercise for their Industry, and give even the greatest Doctors continual inducements to implore his Instructions, and depend on him for his Irradiations, by leaving amongst many passages that stoop unto our weakness, some that may make us sensible of it. It should, me thinks, be looked upon as the Prerogative, not the Disparagement of the Scriptures, that the Revelation of his truth vouchsafed us

by God in them is like a River, where in a Lamb may quench his thirst, and which an Elephant cannot exhaust. I should think him but an ill-natur'd Child, who should be angry to see Strong meat provided for his Elder brothers, because he himself can yet digest nothing but Milk, And as the same Child being grown up to riper years would be then troubled, that according to his first envious wish there were no stronger Aliment provided in the Family than Milk: So when by the attentive and repeated perusal of the Scripture, a Child in knowledge shall attain to some higher measure of skill in the Scriptures, he will then be well pleased to have his understanding exercised by those most mysterious Texts, of which he formerly complained that they surpassed it. However, since there are so many plain passages of Scripture, that clearly hold forth, not only all that is necessary for us to know, but I fear much more than we are careful to learn and practize, the zealous Christian would no more decline feeding on this heavenly food, though all the hard places should still remain such to him. than the *Jews* would forbear

to eat the Paschal Lamb, *though not a bone of it were to be broken.* And (in earnest) would not he merit unrelieved Beggary, that should refuse the profit of a rich Mine, because all those of the World are not yet discovered, nor those of the *Indies* exhausted?

Exod. 12.
46.

Moreover, the pretended Obscureness of the Bible is a mistaken discouragement from reading it: for the frequency of reading it still lessens that obscurity; which like a Mist seems thicker at a distance than when one enters it, and attempts a passage through it, which in our case many pious Students have done so prosperously, as to find by welcom experience, that what at a distance deterred them, was not intended to frustrate Industry, but punish Laziness.

Besides, that the Scripture being avowedly the best Expositor of it self, our Ignorance of those places, whose sense we seek for, makes us often occasionally much knowinger, and more perfect in the meaning of all the rest; and makes us too so much more ready in the uses of them, that I cannot but apply to this subject the Fable of that dying Husband-man, who by telling his Sons of a hidden Mass of Wealth

he had buried in a nameless place of his Vineyard, occasioned their so sedulous Delving all the Ground, and turning up the Earth about the Roots of the Vines, that they found indeed a Treasure, though not in Gold, in Wine: for thus out of hope, by the light of understood Scriptures to penetrate the sense of the obscurer ones, we occasionally so improve our knowledge and readiness in the clearer Passages, that our By-acquists do richly recompence our frustrated (or rather unsuccessing) pains; since our particular Disappointments hinder not the promotion of our general Design, which is a greater proficiency in Spiritual knowledge, and therefore ought not to deter us from the duty of those searches, in which not onely to Discover is happy, but even the unsuccessing Attempts are gainfull, what ever the Event be, the pains being seldome fruitless, but reaching either their end or recompence. And this prompts me to represent to you further, that not onely the Scripture is instructive upon the same account with other Theological writings, but that we may hope to improve our understandings by it upon

upon this score, that it is also the instituted means, as well of Knowledge, as of Grace, and appointed for our Instruction by him, who, as Sin came into the World by Mans listning to the Words of the Devil, is pleased to make Restoring Grace operate chiefly by our listning to the Word of God (whether heard or read.) Wherefore those, whom the Intuition of this encouragement invites to be diligent Perusers of the Scripture, do to their infirm understandings, as the Inhabitants of *Genezareth* did to their sick and weak Countrey-men, lay them in Jesus his way, and consequently in that of recovery. 'Tis of (at least one of) the darkest books of the Scripture, that it is said, *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Prophecy.* The Eunuch in the Acts would (though upon the high way) needs read the Prophet *Isaiah*, and though (as appears by his question to *Philip*) as then he understood not what he read, yet did the Spirit take thence (perhaps arise, as well as) opportunity to reveal Christ unto him, and both satisfy him of the meaning of that Prediction, and acquaint him with the fresh and happy Accom-

Mark 6.
v. 56.

Rev. 1. 3.

Accomplishment of it. And surely this Consideration of the Bibles being one of the Conduit-pipes, through which God hath appointed to convey his Truths, as well as Graces to his Children, should methinks both hugely animate us to the searching of the Scriptures, and equally refresh us in it. For as no Instrument is weak in an omnipotent hand: so ought no means to be looked upon as more promising than that which is like to be prospered by Grace, as 'tis devised by Omniscience. We may confidently expect Gods blessing upon his own Institutions, since we know, *that whatsoever we ask according to the will of God, he will give it us*, and we can scarce ask any thing more agreeable to the will of God, than the competent understanding of that Book, wherein his Will is contained.

The Difficulty ought not to deter us from the duty of Searching the Scriptures, the difficultest commands of God being a Warrant to a Believers confidence of being enabled Acceptably (though not Exactly) to obey them; which St. Peter seems to have known well in the Theory, though he failed in the Practice, when to be enabled to walk

1 John
5. 14.

walk upon the Sea, he desires onely that our Saviour would please to command him to come to him upon the water. The Bible is indeed amongst Books, what the Diamond is amongst stones, the preciousst, and the sparklingst, the most apt to scatter light, and yet the solideest, and the most proper to make Impressions: but were it as unsuitable to its end, as 'tis the contrary, I should remember, that our Saviour could successively imploy even clay and spittle to illuminate blind eyes: and though I thought the Bible to be on other accounts no more than equal to other books of Morality and Devotion, Gods Designation would make me study it more hopefully, by minding me of that of the Syrian Leper, when he would needs have *Abana* and *Parphar*, Rivers of *Damascus*, likely to be as medicinal for his disease, as *Jordan*, and vainly fantasied, that Gods appointment could not put a difference betwixt things that knew no other.

Mat. 12.
v. 28.

John 9. 6.

2 Kings 5.
v. 12.

I know, that because of the Intermixture of some Obscurer Texts of Scripture with the Clear ones, there are divers well-meaning, and even devout persons

persons that leave the study of it for that of other books of Religion, which by leaving out all such difficulter matters seem to promise more of Instruction: But notwithstanding this, I shall not much scruple to affirm, that as the Moon, for all those darker parts, we call her spots, gives us a much greater light, than the Stars that seem all luminous; so will the Scripture; for all its Obscurer passages, afford the Christian and Divine more light than the brightest humane Authors.

To dispatch, since the Scripture is both a Naturally proper, and an Instituted Instrument to convey Revealed knowledge to the studiers of it; and in it many Clear passages may instruct Ordinary capacities; and it's Darker ones may either recompense more Inquisitive wits or humble them; I see not, why the Obscureness of a small part of it should deter any sort of pious persons from the perusal of the whole. And as the Word of God is termed a *light*, so hath it this property of what it is called; that both the plainest Rusticks may, if they will not wilfully shut their eyes, by the benefit of its light direct their steps, and the deepest Philosophers

Psal. 119.
vers. 105.
and Prov.
6. 23.

losophers may be exercised, if not posed and dazled with it's abstruser mysteries. For thus in the Scripture the Ignorant may learn all requisite Knowledge, and the most Knowing may learn to discern their Ignorance.

The second Objection.

To proceed now to the second Objection against the Style of Scripture: The seemingly Disjoynted Method of that Book is by many much Cavilled at; to which, were the Supposal a Truth, I might reply, That the Book of Grace doth but therein resemble the Book of Nature; wherein the Stars, (however Astronomers have been pleas'd to form their Constellations) are not more Nicely or Methodically plac'd than the Passages of Scripture: That where there's nothing but Choice Flowers, in what Order soever you find them, they will make a good Posie: That it became not the Majesty of God to suffer himself to be fetter'd to Humane Laws of Method, which devis'd onely for our own Narrow and Low Conceptions would some-

sometimes be Improper for, and Injurious to his, who may well say (as he doth in the Prophet) that his Thoughts are so far from being ours, that, *As the*
Isa 55. 8. *Heavens are higher than the Earth;*
 52 *so are his Thoughts higher than our thoughts:* That as a Mixture of Amber-Greece and Musk is more Redolent than the Single Ingredients; and as in Compound Medicines, (as Mithridate and Treacle) the Mixture gives the Electuary a higher Virtue than the Sever'd Drugs possess'd; so oftentimes in Morality and Divinity, a Complication of Precept and Example, of Rhetorick and Mystery, may Operate better than their Distinction would. And sure we should Judge that Man a very Captious Creature, that should take Exception at a Profer'd sum, onely because the Half-Crowns, Shillings, and Six-pences, were not sorted in Distinct Heaps, but huddled into One. This, I say, with much more, might be represented, were the Scripture-Series as Destitute of Method, as is pretended: but the Truth is, that the Method, though it be not Pedantically Nice, is Proper and Excellent; (if the Goodness of a Method be to be judg'd

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less by the Order of the Sections, than its being in Order to the Author's End) and never swerv'd from but upon sufficient Ground, or for some Mysterious Purpose: the Laws of Order in the Scripture being rarely declin'd, but as the Laws of Nature are in the World, for Man's Instruction. The Historical Dislocations have their particular Reasons, and, for the most part, are accounted for by Judicious Expositors: and as for the frequent (and sometimes long) Digressions, excepted against in the Epistles of St. Paul, were he a bare Humane Writer, I should possibly attribute his frequent Excursions to his Fulness upon All Subjects, not his Want of Skill to Prosecute any One; and compare his Pen to those Generous Horses, who, though never so well Managed, will ever be Jetting out on this or that side of the Path, not out of Undisciplinedness, but purely out of Metal: But looking upon St. Paul under another Notion, I shall rather choose to tell You, that as Rivers are said to run to the Sea, though oftentimes the Interposition of hard or rising Grounds, or other Obstacles, force them to such

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wind;

Considerations touching the

winding *Meanders*, that they seem to retreat from the Ocean they tend to; which nevertheless with encreased Streams they afterwards bend again their intermitted Course to, having water'd and fertiliz'd by their Passage the Grounds through which they seem'd to wander: so our Apostle, though he direct his Discourse to his Main Scope, may not only without Declining it, but in Order to it, (for in some Cases the Wisdom of the Proverb will inform us, that the Longest Way about is the nearest Way Home) seem for a while to abandon it, by fetching a compass to Answer some Obvious, or Anticipate some Tacit Objection, and afterwards more Prosperously resume his former Considerations, now Strengthen'd by the Defeat of the interposing Scruples, having by the By happily Illustrated and Enrich'd those Subjects, which his Incidental Excursions led him Occasionally to handle. I must add, that in *St. Paul's*, as in the rest of the Inspired Writings, the meer Want of Heeding the Holy Ghost's way of Writing, makes the Method appear to us at a very great Disadvantage. For in the

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Style of the H. Scriptures.

Historical Parts of Scripture, when the Order of Time is Interrupted, those *προβόερα*, *προλήψεις* and *επανοδοί*, and such Dislocations, are us'd oftentimes only to comply with the Connexion of the Matter; and either dispatch all that belongs to the same long Narrative at once, or else to joyn Passages Ally'd in some other Circumstance, though Sever'd in that of Time; and *sometimes* too, things are inserted, which do not readily seem pertinent to the Series of the Discourse, but are Extremely so to some Scope of the Author, and afford much Light and Excellent Hints to the Reader. *Sometimes* the Coherence, where it appears Defective, may be very well made out by rendring *Hebrew* Verbs (and some *Greek Aorists*) in a Preterpluperfect Sense instead of a Perfect; or by some such other Grammatical Variation of the Words, as all that understand *Hebrew* well, know to be allow'd by the Propriety of that Tongue, which ignores divers Moods and Tenses, &c. of our Western Languages. *Sometimes* that which seems Incoherent to a Discourse, serves really to Prevent a Foreseen (though perhaps not alwayes

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Obvious) Probability of Misapplication of it; and so must not be judg'd Impertinent to a Doctrine, which it hinders from being either scrupled at or abused. *Sometimes* the Prophets, in the midst of the Mention of particular Mercies Promis'd to, or Judgments Denounc'd against the People of God, Sally out into Pathetical Excursions relating to the Messias, which seem extremely Abrupt and Incoherent with the rest, to them that consider not how seasonable the Mention of Christ may be, both in that of the Mercies of God, of which he is the Foundation and Pinnacle, the Ground and Consummation, (and the Promise made of him, taught the Faithfull to reason thus with his Apostle, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*) and with the Threats of the Judgments of God, in which he was his People's Grand Consolation. *Sometimes* ὁ διδασκαλός, *The Teacher*, that Bishop of our Souls, who was in the Supreme Degree of Perfection, with St. Paul required of a Bishop, διδασκων, both Fit and Forward to Teach, takes a Rise from any Invi-

Rom. 8.
vers. 32.

John 13.
vers. 13.
2 Pet. 11.
25.
1 Tim. 3.2.

tation, either of a Word, Expression, or Theme, though belonging to his own first Subject, to give further Instructions, by digressing a little to that occasional and intervening Theme; which, however it related to his Matter, suited very well with his Merciful Inclinations to instruct dimm Mortals. *Sometimes*, nay oftentimes, the Inspir'd Discourfers seem to say things not onely Incoherent but Contradictory; (as is very remarkable in divers of St. Paul's Epistles, where he seems to praise and dispraise the same Persons) whereas addressing themselves to Mixt Assemblies, wherein (as *Noah* and *Ham* in the Ark, and the Tares and the Wheat in *Agro Dominico*) there were both Good and Bad Men, Hereticks, especially Gnosticks, and Orthodox Christians, they only so wisely dispens'd and tempered their Discourse, that both these sorts of Persons might find something in what was in general terms delivered, to appropriate to themselves in particular; which Application was necessarily left to their own Consciences to make. *Sometimes* the Order is in Scripture much disturb'd or injur'd by the Omission or Misplacing of a Pa-

renthesis. For there not being any in the *Hebrew* Copies, nor (as 'tis thought) in the Original *Greek* ones, the Publishers of the several Editions of the Bible, have plac'd Parentheses as they have judg'd most convenient; some including in them what others leave out of them; and some making long ones, where others make none at all; and perhaps none of them having been so happy, as to leave no Room for Alterations, that may deserve the Title of Corrections and Amendments. And *sometimes* too, the seeming Immethodicalness of the New Testament (not to determine any thing of the Antiquity, (which is certainly Great) and the Authority of the Accents, and Partition of the Old Testament, (because amongst very able Criticks *Adhuc sub Judice lis est*) is due to the inconvenient Distinction of Chapters and Verses now in use: which though it be a very great Help to the Memory, and be some other wayes serviceable; yet being of no Greater Antiquity than its Contriver, *Stephanus*; and being (though now of General use) but of Private Authority, and by him drawn up in haste; it will be perhaps no slander

der to that Industrious Promoter of Heavenly Learning, to say, he hath sometimes Sever'd Matters that should have been left United, and United others which more conveniently he might have Sever'd, and that his Lucky Attempt ought not to lay any Restraint upon other Learned Men, from making use of the same Liberty he took in altering the former Partitions (for of them I speak, not of the Punctuation) of the New Testament; in altering his Alterations, to the best Advantage of the Sense or Method. The Analytical Works of some (I wish I could say Many) Judicious Expositors and Divines upon the Scripture, may sufficiently manifest its being generally reducible enough to a Perspicuous Order; and that it conforms to the known Laws of Method, where its Diviner one doth not transcend them. And it were not impossible for me to give divers Instances to manifest, that as the North-star, though it be lesse luminous than many others, yet, by reason of its Position, doth better guide the Pilot, than ev'n the Moon her self: so are there some Texts in Scripture, which though lesse Conspi-

cuons in themselves, are, by reason of their Relation to a Context, more Instructive than other more Radiant Passages, to which These would be much inferiour, if they were not as well considerable for their being There, as such.

The third Objection.

Ally'd to their Objection, who find fault with the Scripture for being Immethodical, is theirs, who would fain perswade us, that it is seldom Coherent, and scarce any where Discursive. And I have observ'd with trouble, that ev'n some Pious Readers are easily tempted to look upon the Bible as barely a Repository of Sentences and Clauses, where Divine Truths lie Huddl'd, and not Rang'd, and are too ready to apply to its Texts the Title, *Nero gave Seneca's style, of Arena sine calce.* Whereas an Intelligent and Attentive Peruser may cleerly enough discern, both that the Prophets and Apostles do make frequent Deductions and Inferences, and that their Arguments, though not cast into Mood and Figure, are oftentimes as cogent as theirs

theirs, that use to make Syllogisms in *Barbara.* I frequently entertain myself with both those Authors, and yet methinks, *St. Paul* Reasons as Solidly and as Acutely as *Aristotle*: and certainly, according to *David's* Logick, (*He that planted the Ear shall he not hear? he that fram'd the Eye shall he not see? he that teacheth Man Knowledge shall not he know?*) the First and Grand Author of Reason should as well know, how to manage and disclose that Faculty, as they that possess it but by Participation, and glister so but with some few condescending Beams, vouchsaf'd by that bright Sun, who is indeed the *Father of Lights*, *from which each Good and Perfect Gift descends.* But on this occasion to point at a few Particulars, I consider

*Psal. 94.
7. 10.*

Jam. 1. 17.

1. That some Ratiocinations of Scriptures remain undiscern'd or misunderstood, because of our unacquaintedness with the Figurative, and (oftentimes) Abrupt way of Arguing usual amongst the Eastern People, who in their Arguments us'd to leave much to the Discretion and Collection of those they dealt with; and discours'd at a wide distance from the Logical Forms

Forms of our *European* Schools, as to Persons vers'd in their Writings cannot but be notorious.

2. That the seeming Incoherency of many Ratiocinations proceeds purely from the mis-rendring of the Original Particles, especially of the *Hebrew* Conjunction Copulative *Vau*, or *Kaf*, (as 'tis diversly pronounc'd by the *Jews*, of whom I shall here advertise you once for all, that they have confess'd to me, they differ in pronouncing *Hebrew*, not only from the *Christians*, but exceedingly from one another) for there is hardly any of those Particles that hath not besides the Obvious, Various significations, of which, if that were skilfully and freely in every Text taken up, that would There afford the Best Sense, the Scripture would, I am confident, appear much more Coherent and Argumentative than Translations or Expositors are wont to make it; and though I did but consider how many thousand times the Particle *Vaf* is used in the Scripture, and that it doth not Onely (though it do Primarily) signifie *AND*, but hath also (I speak within Compass) four or five and twenty other significations (as That, But,

But, Or, So, When, Therefore, Yet, Then, Because, Now, As, Though, &c. and that the Sense only gives it this great Diversity of Acceptions; I cannot but think that if we alwayes allow'd our selves an equal freedome in rendring it, where the Motive (which is the Exigency or Conveniency of the Sense) is the same, the dexterous use and Rendring of that one Particle, would make no small Number of Texts both better Understood, and more Esteem'd.

3. That sometimes (especially in *Salomon's* and *St. Paul's* Writings) in many Passages so penn'd as to contain (like *Seneca's*) a tacit kind of Dialogue, That is unskilfully by Readers, and even Interpreters, taken for an Argument or an Assertion, which is indeed an Objection: and that such a Mistake must mightily Discompose the Contexture of a Discourse, even a raw Logician need not be told.

4. That the Omission or Misplacing of Parentheses (which the *Hebrew* Text altogether wanting, Interpreters have supply'd and us'd at their own Discretion) makes the Scripture oftentimes appear less Discursive, as well as (what we elsewhere complain of) less Metho-

Methodical. And the like may be said of the Points of Interrogation. For whether it be true or no what the Critics esteem, that in the Original *Greek* Copies of the New Testament there were no such Points (as indeed I have found them wanting in the Ancientest Manuscripts I have seen) 'tis certain, that in our Modern Copies, both *Greek* and Translated; the Authors of several Editions have variously plac'd them as themselves thought fit: and though instead of the Interrogative Point, the *Hebrews* make use of their interrogative *He*; yet that the Sense of the Words, and a certain supposed Modulation, do oftentimes make an Interrogation where that *He* is wanting, an *Hebrician* can scarcely ignore, no more than a Logician, that the Interrogation is not alwayes supply'd to the best Advantage of the Scripture's Logick.

5. That the Apostles and other Inspir'd Discourers in the Bible, divers times use Arguments, not to Convince Opposers, but to Confirm Believers. For the Persons they reason with, being such, oftentimes, as Esteem them Teachers sent from God, upon whose score all they Teach exacts Belief, they may

may without Irrationality use Arguments to confirm in their Doctrine Men already acquiescing in the Principles of it, and perswaded of their Integrity, Sufficiency, and Authority; that 'twould be improper to urge against a Refractory Disbeliever, that is convinc'd of none of these. And as Masters often use in instructing their Scholars, Arguments they would forbear to insist on against a Profess'd Antagonist: so the Apostles dealing with those that thought them Inspir'd Teachers, and fully Instructed in the Mysteries of Scripture, and the Design'd Dispensations of God, might justly draw Inferences not to be urg'd against an Infidel, from a Doctrine first delivered by themselves, or from a Text or Passage wherein those they reason'd with justly suppos'd they might know more of the Mind and Counsel of God than other Men; and would teach Nothing as Such that was not so.

6. That Arguments Exquisite, and (as Artists term them) Apodictical, had been oftentimes less Proper in Discourses, which being address'd to Popular Auditories, requir'd rather Popular Arguments; which the Inspir'd Discourers

courfers employ, but as likely to be better Understood, and more prevalent than those which are so Logical that they require Logicians to relish them. Where Teaching and Perswading is the Design, not only the Native Cogency of a Ratiocination is to be consider'd; but it's Proportion to their Spirits 'tis address'd to, and it's aptitude to Work upon them. For as a Spider will catch Flies better than a Hawk can, as a Cat is more fit to destroy Mice than a Gray-hound, though this be stronger and swifter; and as the Crowing of a Cock will (according to famous Naturalists) sooner fright a Lion than the Bellowing of a Bull, though the latter be much the more terrifying Noise, and proceed from the more formidable Animal: so oftentimes weaker and Popular Arguments, succeed better with a resembling Auditory, than the Irrefragablest Syllogisms.

7. That divers Scripture-Arguments do not Logically and Cogently prove the Thing they would perswade, meerly because they were meant only for what Logicians call *Argumenta ad Hominem*; (Reasonings designed not so properly to Demonstrate the Opinion they

they contend for, irrelatively and abstractedly consider'd, as to convince of the Truth of that Opinion, the Persons they are address'd to) and consequently the Inspir'd Discourfers arguing *à Concessis*, from Principles conceded and Confess'd by those they reason with, though the Principles should be unsolid, the Ratiocination is not. Thus there are Divers Texts of the Old Testament apply'd to Christ in the New, which though they did not now inevitably conclude against the Present *Jews*, were without any Illogicalness employ'd against their Ancestors; because then the Relation of those Passages to the Messias was so acknowledg'd, that there needed but the Pertinent Applications made of them in the New Testament; whereas the Refractoriness of the Succeeding *Jews* hath taught them to devise so many Sophistical Evasions to elude the Texts we speak of, that they now Dispute not only the Application of them, but the Explication too. St. *Jude* argues with the Rodomonts of his Time, out of the Story of the Arch-Angels and the Devil's Contest about the Body of *Moses*: and though perhaps that Story be

be (like the *Jewish Book* whence it seems not improbable it was taken) somewhat Apocryphal, yet as long as they Reverenc'd it, it was not Irrational in him to urge them with it, and employ it to the Redargution of their Insolence. And as although there be nothing lesse solid, and more fickle than the Wind; yet the skilful Pilot diligently observes it, and makes it drive on his Ship more forcibly, than the Powerfulest and best contriv'd Engins in the World could: so though there be scarce any thing more groundlesse and unstable than Popular Opinions and Perswasions, yet a Wise Teacher neglects them not, and may sometimes make such use of them, as to draw thence Arguments more Operative than the accuratest Syllogisms Logick could devise. And indeed the most convincing Proofs of Assertions being ever afforded by the *Medium* wherein both parties agree, not only *Socrates* in *Plato's Dialogues*, but dexterous Discourfers generally have often elected the drawing of Inferences from the Opinions and Concessions of those they dealt with, as the most perswasive and successful way of Arguing. To all which I shall add,

8. That

8. That another thing which very generally keeps Men from discerning the Reasonings (and consequently oftentimes the Reasonableness and true Sense) of Scripture Texts, is, the Shineness of Divines to let the Context and the Speakers Scope. regulate their choice, amongst all the Various, though not equally Obvious, significations of Ambiguous Words and Phrases. 'Tis not that (as far as I have observed) Men almost of all Religions are not wont to make bold with (and perhaps for a need to Strain or Wrest) Phrases and Words of Scripture, when the giving them less usual Notions may fit them to serve their turns: but the Mischief is, that they decline the Commonest Acceptations, but to make the Texts they quit them in, Symphonize with their Tenents, not with their neighbouring Texts. 'Twere methinks Impartialler, if the frequenter Impartialler of an Expression be to be wav'd (as oftentimes it must) for one less Current, to do this to make the Scripture Coherent or Discursive: and then, for our Opinions, rather to conform them to the Sense of the Scripture, than wrest the Words of Scripture to Them. But per-

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haps this Impartiality would silence too many of our clamorous Controversies (by shewing some to be Groundless and others Undeterminable) to be likely to take place in the heated Spirits of men; some of whom, I fear, whilst their feuds and Fierceness last, would be willing to have the Texts of Scripture loose stones, which they may more easily throw at their Adversaries, than Built up into a Structure, wherein they must lose that convenience (it being difficult to pluck stones out of a Building) though Reason her self were the Architect.

But to leave these eager disputants to their Animosities, we shall again repeat, that the Bible loses much by not being consider'd as a Systeme. For though many other Books are comparable to Cloath, in which by a small Pattern we may safely judge of the whole piece; Yet the Bible is like a fair Suit of *Arras*, of which though a Shread may assure you of the fineness of the Colours, and Richness of the stuff, yet the Hangings never appear to their true Advantage, but when they are display'd to their full Dimensions, and seen together.

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These things, *Theophilus*, among many others, may be represented on the behalf of the Scripture, against those who will needs Censure it as a Collection, not to say a Heap, of Immetho-dical and Incoherent Passages. But lest you should suspect me of Partiality, I shall ingenuously confess to you, that there are some things in the Oeconomy of Scripture, that do somewhat Distress my Reason to find a Satisfactory account of; and that there are very few things wherein my Curiosity is more concern'd, and would more welcom a Resolution in. But when I remember how many things I once thought Incoherent, in which I now think I discern a Close (though Mystick) Connection; when I reflect on the Author and the Ends of the Scripture, and when I allow my self to imagine how exquisite a Symmetry (though as yet undiscern'd by me) Omniscience Doth, and After-Ages (probably) Will discover in the Scripture's Method, in spite of those seeming Discomposures that now puzzle me: when I think upon all this, I say, I think it just to check my forward Thoughts, that would either presume

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to know all the Recluse Ends of Omniscience, or peremptorily judge of the Fitness of Means to Ends unknown; and am reduc'd to think that Oeconomy the Wisest, that is chosen by a Wisdom so boundless, that it can at once Survey all Expedients, and so Unbias'd, that it hath no interest to choose any, but for it's being Fittest. I shall annex, that I think those must derogate hugely from the Scripture, who onely consider the Sense of the Particular Sections, or ev'n Books of it: for I conceive, that (as in a lovely Face, though the Eye, the Nose, the Lips, and the other Parts singly look'd on may beget Delight and deserve Praise; yet the whole Face must necessarily lose much by not being seen All together; so) though the sever'd Leaves and Portions of Scripture do Irrelatively, and in themselves, sufficiently betray and evidence their own Heavenly Extraction; yet he that shall attentively survey that whole Body of Canonical Writings we now call the Bible, and shall judiciously in their Systeme compare and confer them to each other, may discern upon the whole Matter, so admirable a Contexture

ture and Disposition, as may manifest that Book to be the Work of the same Wisdom, that so Accurately compos'd the Book of Nature, and so Divinely contriv'd this vast Fabrick of the World. The Books of Scripture illustrate and expound each other; *Genesis* and the *Apocalypse* are in some things reciprocal Commentaries; (as in Trigonometry the Distantest side and Angle use best to help us to the Knowledge one of th' other;) and as in the Mariners Compass, the Needle's extremity, though it seem to point purposely but at the North, doth yet at the same time discover both East and West, as distant as they are from it, and from each other: so do some Texts of Scripture guide us to the Intelligence of others, from which they are widely distant in the Bible, and seem so in the Sense. 'Tis as High as Pious a Satisfaction to observe how the Sacred Pen-men supply each others Ommissions (as is very observable in the four Evangelist's mention of the Genealogy of Christ,) according to Gods Degrees and Seasons in dispensing the Knowledge of his Truths and Mysteries in the several Ages of the Church;

2 Pet. i.
19.

(to which he at first vouchsaf'd *but a light shining in a Dark place untill the day Dawn*, and to which these mutual Irradiations and secret References perswade, that all these reputed Authors had their Pens guided by an Omniscient Hand, and were but the several Secretaries of the same Enditer) and to find in Writers sever'd by so many Ages, and Regions, a Harmony whose Dissonances serve but to manifest the Sincerity and Unconspiringness of the Writers. And truly for my part, I am professedly enough an Impartialist, not to stick to Confess to you, *Theophilus*, that I read the Bible and the Learnedst Expositors on it, with somewhat Particular Aims and Dispositions. For besides, that I come not to them with a crowd of Articles which I am there resolved to find or make Arguments to defend, with the Overthrow of all Antagonists, esteeming it less safe to carry my Opinions to the Scriptures than to take them up There: besides this, I say, though I neglect not those clear Passages or Arguments that may establish the Doctrine of that Church I most adhere to, yet am I much less busied, and concern'd

cern'd to collect those subtile Glosses or Inferences that can but enable me to serve one Subdivision of Christians against another, than heedfully to make *such* Observations, as may solidly Justifie to my own thoughts, and improve in them, a Reverence for the Scripture it self, and Christianity in general: *such* Observations as may disclose to me in the Bible, and the grand Articles clearly deliver'd in it, a Majesty and an Excellency becoming God himself, and transcending any other Author; and *such* Observations (to dispatch) as may Unveyl to me in the Scripture, and what it Treats of, that

πολυποίκιλον & Κορίαν τῆς Θεᾶς, *Manifold Wisdom of God*, which even the Angels learn by the Church. These are, I confess, the Things (as to speculative Divinity) that I Gladliest meet with, and take the heedfullest Notice of, in the Writings of Divines, of whatsoever Religion that owns the Scripture: (for in this I am almost equally gratified by the abler Expositors of all dissenting Sects) For I can scarce think any Pains mispent, that brings me in solid Evidences of that Great Truth, That the Scripture is the Word

Eph. 3.10.

of God, which is indeed the Grand Fundamental; all other Articles generally thought so, being, if Truths, better deducible from this one, than This from any of Them. And I use the Scripture, not as an Arsenal, to be resorted to onely for Arms and Weapons to defend this Party, or defeat its Enemies, but as a Matchless Temple, where I delight to Be, to contemplate the Beauty, the Symmetry, and the Magnificence of the Structure, and to Encrease my Awe, and Excite my Devotion to the Deity there Preached and Ador'd.

The fourth Objection.

Of Texts
seemingly
Impertinent or
Useless.

The Apostle of the Gentiles Teaching us that the *Whole Scripture* (for so I should rather English the *Πᾶσα γραφή*, because there follows) is *θεοπνευστή* *Divinely inspir'd, and is Profitable for Doctrine, for Conviction, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; That the Man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnished unto all Good Works:* and the Apostle of the Circumcision assuring us, that, *Prophecy came not in Old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God*

2 Tim. 3.
15, 16.

2 Pet. 1. 21.

God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; we are not to believe that so Divine an Enditer, by Secretaries, most of them Conspicuous by the Gifts of Prophecy or Miracles, would solemnly Publish to the World and for his Church, any thing that ought indeed to be accounted Impertinent or Useless. And yet of these Qualities, some Persons, more Bold than Learned and Considerate, are pleas'd to impeach many Passages of Scripture. But truly that God who was so Precisely Exact, in the Dimensions, Proportions, and all other Circumstances of the Antient Tabernacle, though it were but a Typical and Temporary Structure, ought to be suppos'd at least as careful to let nothing Superfluous intrude into those Volumes, which being consign'd to the Church for the Perpetual Use and Instruction of it, must contain nothing uncondusive to those Designs; the least Text in it being as contributory to the Completing of the Bible, as every Loop or Pin was to the Perfection of the Tabernacle. God, by so Great a Condescension to the Weakness of our Capacities and Memories, as the with-

with-holding from the Canon so many Writings of *Solomon*, and so many of the Oracles and Miracles of our *Saviour*; and by so strangely Preserving the whole Scripture, (for the Books pretended to be lost, though Written by never so Holy Men, are either in our Bibles extant under other Names, or cannot be Demonstrated to have ever been Canonical, that is, entrusted with the Church as the Infallible Rule of Faith and Life) do's, methinks, abundantly evince his Design of Inching nothing there, that hath no tendency to his People's Instruction. Were not my Discourse confin'd by my Occasions, and the fear of Distressing Your Patience to somewhat narrow limits, I could easily by several Instances of Texts, seemingly Useless, shew how much men have been mistaken in imagining them such. Many Passages that at the first or second Reading I could find nor Guess no Uses of, at the Third or Fourth I have discover'd so pregnant in them, that I almost equally admir'd the Richness of those Texts, and my not Discerning it sooner. A Superficial and Cursory Perusal presents us many things as

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Trivial or Superfluous, which a Perspicacious Reflection discloses to be Mysterious. And of so precious a Quality is the Knowledge of Scripture, that no one Part of it ought to be esteemed Useless, if it may but facilitate or improve the Understanding of any other: Divine Truths being of that Worth, that the Knowledge and Acquist of a few of them, as much out-values a greater Knowledge of other Things, as a Jeweller's Skill and Stock is preferr'd before a Mason's. And I consider here, that as the Bible was not Written for any one particular Time or People, but for the whole Church Militant diffus'd through all Nations and Ages; as many Passages (as those oppos'd to the *Zabian's* Magical Rites) have at first been necessary for the *Jews*, which lose the Degree (at least) of that Quality for us; so there are many others very Usefull, which will not perhaps be found so these many Ages: being possibly reserv'd, by the Prophe-tick Spirit that Endited them, (and whose Omniscience Comprizes and Unites in one Prospect all Times and all Events) to quell some future foreseen Heresie; which will not perhaps be

be Born till we be Dead ; or resolve some yet unformed Doubt, or confound some Error that hath not yet a Name: So that all the Parts of Scripture are useful in some Ages , and some in All. We read in the Gospel, that at the first Institution of the Eucharist, 'twas expressly said to the Disciples concerning the Sacramental Wine, *Drink ye All of it*, whereas upon the Exhibition of the Bread the Particle *All* is omitted. This Difference 'tis like, the Primitive Christians marvell'd at, and discerning no Reason for it, might be tempted to think the Passage Useless or Superfluous; but We that live in a Age where in the Cup is deny'd to much the greater Part of the Communicants, are invited not onely to Absolve the Recording of this Particularity, but to Admire it. The Ceremonial Law, with all its Mystic Rites, (which, like the Manger to the Shepherds, holds forth Wrap'd in His Swathing-Cloths, the Infant Jesus,) to many that bestow the Reading on it, seems scarce Worth it: Yet what Use the Apostles made of it with the Jews; and how Necessary the Knowledge of it is yet to Vs, in our Controversies with

Mat. 26.

27

Mark 14.

23.

Luke 2.

with them, he that is any thing vers'd in them cannot ignore. And let Me tell you, *Theophilus*, that those Fundamental Controversies are both more Necessary and more Worthy a Wise-mans study, than most of those comparatively Trifling ones, that at Present so Miserably, (not to say so Causelessly) Distract Christendome. How many Passages of the Prophets by Lazy Readers are thought to have no Use, which, as the Starre did the Wise-Men, lead the Attentive Considerers to Christ; and so Loudly and Harmoniously, together with *Moses's* Typick Shades, utter those Words of the Baptist, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World*, that I meet with numerous Passages in the New Testament, to which I cannot but apply what St. *Matthew* notes upon his Narrative of our Saviours apprehension: *All this was done that the Scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled*; or rather now all this was so done that they were fulfilled; (for so oftentimes the Context Commands us to render the *iva* in these Citations) and which Recall to my Mind the History of the Transfiguration; For as there the Apo-

Mat. 2.

John 1.29.

Mat. 26.
56.

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Mat. 17.
3. 8.

John 1. 55.

stles at first *saw* Moses and Elias *Talking with Jesus*, but at the Second View (when the Cloud was with'drawn, and he had Spoken to them) *saw none but Jesus only*; so such Passages as I am speaking of, in the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, at first Survey appear very Distinct Things, but upon a Second Inspection, and the Access of more Light from an Attentive Collation of things, they do All, as it were, Vanish into Christ; *Of whom* (to use an Apostle's Terms) *Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did Write*: and At whom those Types and those Predictions pointed. Those Instances of the Old Testament, of the Confus'd or Dislocated Mention of Known Pedigrees and Stories, were possibly Useless and even Troublesome to the Antient Jews; but serve Us extremely to silence the Cavils of the Modern Ones, when they would invalidate the New Testament's Authority; because in St. *Steven's* Narrative, and some of the Evangelist's Genealogy's, the Holy Ghost is pleas'd to employ in the New Testament, that Obscure strain he had oftner us'd in the Old: (and sure as insultingly as the Jews use

use to urge against us Objections of that Nature, I could readily Retaliate, and Repay them in the same Coyn, were there no Common Enemy that might be Advantag'd by our Quarrel, and employ either's Arguments against both.) And as there are divers Prophetical Passages in the *Revelation*, which we know as little the Use as Meaning of, which yet doubtless our Posterity will not find Barren, when once the Accomplishment shall have prov'd the Expofitor of those Predictions, whose Event will (if it do nothing else) attest the Omniscience of their Inspirer: so possibly, of many Mosaick Constitutions, wherof we Christians find Excellent Uses, most of the Old Jews scarce knew any; at least my Conversation with our Modern Rabbies, shows me that they, whilst they obstinately decline, referring them to the *Messias*, can scarce make any more of the Inspir'd and Mysterious Laws of *Moses*; (Except those that Relate to the Zabian Superstition; with which too, most of their Doctors are as unacquainted as ours) than the Egyptians, or Gymnosophists, could of their Sacrifices and other Ritual Devotions.

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'Tis not that I think all the Books that Constitute the Bible, of equal Necessity or equal Usefulness, because they are of equal Extraction; or that I esteem the Church would lose as much in the Prophecy of *Nahum*, as that of *Isaiah*; or in the Book of *Ruth*, as in the Epistle to the *Romans*, or the Gospel of *John*: (as the fix'd Stars themselves, though of the same Heav'n, are not all of the same Magnitude and Lustre) But I esteem all the constituent Books of Scripture, necessary to the Canon of it; as Two Eyes, Two Ears, and the rest of the Members are All necessary to the Body; without divers of which it may Be, but not be so Perfect, and which are all of Great, though not of Equal Usefulness. And perhaps it might without too much Hyperbole be said yet further; that as amongst the Stars that Shine in the Firmament, though there be a Disparity of Greatness compar'd to one another, yet they are all of them Lucid and Celestial Bodies, and the Least of them far Vaster than any thing on Earth; so of the two Testaments that compose the Bible, though there may be some Disparity

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in Relation to themselves, yet are they Both, Heav'nly and Instructive volumes, and inestimably out-valuing any the Earth affords, or Human Pens ere trac'd. And I must add, that as Mineralists observe, that Rich Mines are wont to lye Hid in those Grounds, whose Surface bears no Fruit-Trees, (too much malign'd by the Arsenical and resembling fumes) nor is well stor'd with usefull Plants or Verdure; (as if God would Endear those Ill-favour'd Lands by giving them great portions:) so divers Passages of Holy Writ, which appear Barren and Unpromising to our First Survey, and hold not obviously forth Instructions or Promises, being by a Sedulous Artist Search'd into, (and the Original Word *ἐρυνάω* us'd in that Text of *Search the Scriptures*, does properly enough signify the searching for hid Treasure) afford out of their penetrated Bowels, Rich and Precious Mysteries of Divinity.

Joh. 5. 39.

The Fifth Objection.

The next thing imputed to the Scripture is, that it contains many things Trivial or Impertinent: And 'tis not impossible, but that some things may Seem so, though they Are not: Of this sort are Disjoynted speeches and abrupt Transitions observ'd in many of our Saviour's Discourses; in which also we sometimes read him to have Answer'd, without being ask'd the Question, (though that be otherwise salvageable by a Critick) and sometimes to have Answer'd to a quite other Question than that he was ask'd. But this is not to be thought an Absurdity, but an Excellency in the Replies of Christ; who possessing the Prerogative of discerning Hearts, did Preach after that rate; His Oratory took a shorter Way than Ours can follow it in: he Prosecuted his Design by Altering his Discourses; and wisely measur'd the Fitness of his Heavenly Sermons, by their Relation to his End, not his Theme. For as he knew his hearers Thoughts, he address'd himself to them; and reaching them in their earliest Formation

Formation, and as it were, their first Cradle, before they had leisure to pass into the Tongue, he not more convinc'd his Auditory by Answering their Thoughts, than by thus Manifesting that he Knew them. Of his so much undervalu'd, Parables, some, if not most, do (like those Oysters that besides the Meat they afford us, contain Pearls) not only include excellent Moralities, but comprize important Prophecies. The Parable of the Prægnant Grain of Mustard-seed that so suddenly grew to so large a Plant, was a (now fulfill'd) Prediction of the Admirably swift progress of the Gospel; which from despicable Beginnings, soon prosper'd to a height, that rendred it almost as fit an Object for Wonder as for Faith. That other Parable of the treacherous Husbandmen, clearly foretold Christs Death by the *Jews* Malice, and their Destruction for it. And I despair not to see unheeded Prophecies disclos'd in others of them, especially being inform'd that there is a Critick, (Monsieur *A.B.*) now at work upon a Design of Manifesting many otherwise interpreted Passages of the New Testa-

*Mat. 13.
v. 31, 32.*

*Mat. 21.
33.*

ment to be Prophecies ; of whom no less than the Famousst of the Modern *Rabbies*, *Menaſſe Ben-Israel*, (one time I made him a Viſit at his own Houſe in *Amſterdam*) gave me this Character, that he took him for the Ableſt Perſon of the Chriſtians. Thoſe Hiſtorical Circumſtances quarrell'd with, in Chriſt's Parables, are like the Feathers that wing our Arrows, which though they Pierce not like the Head, but ſeem Slight things, and of a differing matter from the reſt, are yet requiſite to make the Shaft to pierce, & do, both convey it to, and penetrate the Mark. But nothing is thought more impertinent in Scripture than the frequent Repetitions. But the Learned need not to be told, that many things ſeem to the Ignorant bare Repetitions, which yet ever bring along with them ſome Light or ſome Acceſſion: in that comparable to the Stars, which as like as they ſeem to Vulgar Gazers, are by the ſkilful Aſtrologer taught to contain under that Colour and Figure common to them all, very Peculiar and diſtinct Influences. I here alſo conſider, that in all Languages there are ſome Cuſtomary Geminati-

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ons and Expreſſions, which, though to Strangers they appear Superfluous, if not Abſurd ; to the Natives, and in the Propriety of that Speech, are not only Current, but oftentimes Emphatical. I find withall, that there is ſcarce any of theſe ſeeming Impertinencies, of which a Learned and Judicious Expoſitor cannot aſſign a pertinent Cauſe or Reason. And I conſider too, that the Books of Scripture being Endited, not all at Once, but at very ſeveral and diſtant Times ; (according to the Known ſaying, that *Nunquam ſatis docetur quod nunquam ſatis diſcitur*) the Repetition of the ſame Sins and Errors, requir'd that of the ſame Menaces and Diſſwaſions ; whoſe frequent enforcing, ſerving both to Atteſt and to Convince the Sinner's Obſtinacy, was not a bare Repeating, but ſuch a Redoubling as we are ſain to uſe, to drive in a Nail to the Head ; (and the Words of the Wiſe are, in the Wiſe man's Words, *As Nails faſtned by the Maſters of Aſſemblies*) where though in all the renew'd Stroaks the buſie Hammer gives, the Act be ſtill the ſame, yet is no blow ſuperfluous ; the Number of them ſerving to compleat their O-

Ecc. 12 12

peration. They that in perusing Books have the Learning and Skill to strip them of what Oratory or Stealth hath Dress'd and Disguis'd them in; will easily discern most of them to be but Vary'd Repetitions; which for my part I find differing from those of Scripture, but in that the later do in the same Words generally comprize New Matter, whereas the former usually present us Stale Matter in New Words. And I consider further, that our own sad Experience showing us, that there is no Single Text of Scripture that Subtler Heretick's Sophistry cannot plausibly enough elude; the Holy Ghost foreseeing this from the Beginning, hath Mercifully and Wisely provided, that the Fundamental Truths of Faith and Manners should be held forth in so Many Places, and in so much Variety of Expressions, that one or other of them must unavoidably intercept those Evasions, and escape those Misconstructions, that Sophistry may put upon the rest. Which Providence alone hath preserv'd many Articles from the Attempts of Hereticks; making them both Blush to Question, and Despair to Disprove a Truth attested by more than

than 2 or 3 Witnesses; and giving Orthodox Believers the Satisfaction of having their Anchor ty'd to a *Threefold Cord which is not easily broken*. Most of the Bibles Repetitions (or Inculcations rather) teach us something or other untaught before and (as in *Pharaoh's Vision*, though both the Ears and the Kine signifi'd the same thing, yet *Joseph's Interpretation* shows that neither was Superfluous, ev'n those few that teach us nothing else, Teach us at least the Importance (or some other Attribute,) of those repeated Points we were taught before. And I scruple not to compare the Expressions of the Scripture to a Rose, where though so many Leaves neerly resemble each other, there's not one of them but contributes to the Beauty and Perfection of the Flower.

Gen. 4.
25. 31.

The Sixth Objection.

I am not unacquainted with the קרי *Keri*, and the כתיב *Cethib*: nor the ספרי *Tikkûn Soph'rim* in the Old Testament: Nor yet with the *Variae Lectiones* (especially those of the *Eastern* and *Western* Jews as they are call'd) taken notice of by Modern Criticks in

Of Contradictions presum'd betwixt Passages of Scripture,

the *Hebrew* Text, of the Old, as well as in the *Greek* of the New Testament. I am not neither altogether a Stranger to the Difficulties to be met with in making good the Citations we find made of divers Texts of the Former of those Sacred Instruments in the Later: In which they seem not unfrequently to differ much from what we find extant in the ancient Testament, as to the Words, and sometimes too as to the Sense. These things, I say, though by some much urg'd against the Scripture, I am not ignorant of. But I think it not fit to consider them in this place; not only, because those that are much better qualified for such a Work than I, have done it already; but because these Objections relating rather to the Truth or the Authority than to the Style of the Scripture, the Nature of my present task does not oblige me to examine them. Especially, since I have already said something of them, and may say more, in what I write on the behalf of the Christian Religion. And 'tis upon these grounds, *Theophilus*, that I also decline at present the consideration of what is wont to be Objected, as if there were

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2 Pet.
3 16.

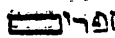
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vers'd with, have very much confirm'd me: though I have still esteem'd, that the Best as well as Shortest way, is not to wrangle with them about every Nicety, where the Defeat of their Objections gives us no Victory over their Incredulity, and by but evidencing the Scripture's not being either False or Absurd, can serve but to Justifie our Reverence to them, not to impart it; but by solidly asserting the Divine Origination of the Scripture, reduce men to ascribe their scruples to the true Cause; & perswade us to the Temper of the Apostles, who, when Christ had utter'd a *Hard saying*, which so unsetled many of his Disciples that they deserted him upon it; though (their gross Misapprehensions of numerous other much less Obscure Passages will easily perswade us) they relish'd it not aright, yet would by no means Forsake him for their Master, because, says their Spokes-man, *Peter, Thou hast the words of Eternal Life, and we believe, and are Sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God: teaching us with one Grand and comprehensive Truth, to silence Particular Scruples. And one thing*

Job. 6. 60.
66. 68, 69.

thing would not be unworthy our Objector's considering; That the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures, and consequently their not being Contradictory to themselves, hath (as we may elsewhere have occasion to manifest more at large) been immemorially Believ'd by the Learned'st Men in the World; many of whom may be very reasonably suppos'd to have examin'd Opinions without any other Concern in their Enquiries than that of not being Deceiv'd; or any other End than that of Finding out the Truth; and most of whom, though by their Sedulousness and their Erudition they discover'd Difficulties in the Bible that our Quærists could never have dream'd of; yet did they all conclude the Belief of the Scriptures, grounded on as much Reason as is consistent with a due Latitude for the Exercise of Faith: which possibly needs some Dimness or Reluctancy in the Understanding, to be an acceptable Vertue of the Will; (Faith and the Twilight seeming to agree in this Property, that a mixture of Darknes is requisite to both: which too refulgent a Light, the one vanishing into Know-

Knowledge, as the other into Day.) And now Faith thus casually presents her self in my Way, it will, perhaps, not be impertinent to observe, that Christ often deals with New Believers, as he is recorded to have done with *Nathaniel*; for as when that Guileless *Israelite* had acknowledg'd him the *Messias*, upon the bare Evidence of his having been discern'd by him under the Fig-Tree, our Blessed Saviour tells him, *Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the Fig-Tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these*; (which in the next Verse he proceeds to mention) So when men once have embrac'd the perswasion of the Scripture's being Divinely Inspir'd, that Faith is a thing so acceptable to God, that he often discovers to them, to confirm them in their Belief, Arguments much clearer than those that induc'd them To it; and convinces them of the Reasonableness of having submitted their Reason to him that gave it them. And, (as if there were Mysteries in which Faith doth more prosperously make way for Understanding, than That is set awork to introduce Faith:

Faith:) it happens to them as it did to the two Blind-men mention'd in the Gospel; in whom our Saviour first requir'd Faith; and (having found That, he) then Open'd their Eyes.

*Math. 9.
27, 28.*

The seventh Objection.

From the (not long since mention'd) frequent Repetitions to be met with in the Scripture, and from the unusual Method wherein the Author of it has thought fit that the Divine Truths and Precepts should be extant there, Divers have been pleas'd to take occasion to Criminate the Bible, as if, its Bulk consider'd, it were but a barren Book, wherein Instructions are but sparingly scatter'd in comparison of what is to be met with in divers other Writings, where Repetitions are avoided, and more of usefull Matter is deliver'd in fewer Words. And hence it is (say these Objectors) that many Persons unquestionably Religious, choose rather to study Other Books of Devotion and Morality, as containing more full and Instructive Precepts of Good Life.

I might Answer this Allegation by
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*John 1.
50.*

representing, that the several Particulars whereon the Accusation is grounded, having been already examin'd by me, I need not say any thing distinctly to this Accumulative Charge. But because I would not only Defend my Veneration for the Scripture, but Perswade it, I shall on this occasion offer two or three things to Consideration.

Although then the Scripture were less replenish'd with Excellent Doctrines, and were but, as well as the best of other Books, like Mines, in the richest of which the Golden Oar is mingl'd with store of less precious Materials, (and needs a laborious separation from them;) yet sure it would, like those Mines, deserve to be carefully digg'd in: and 'twill become the gratefull Christians Zeal to imitate him in the Parable, who having found

Mat. 13.
44.

a Treasure hid in a Field, stuck at no Price within his Power, to purchase the whole Field for the Treasures sake.

But God be prais'd, this is not the Case, for 'tis onely our Ignorance, our Laziness, or our Indevotion, that keeps us from discovering, that the

Scrip-

Scripture is so far from being, as the Objectors would have it, a Wilderness or a barren Soyl, that it may be much more fitly compar'd to that bless'd Land of Promise, which is so often said in Scripture to be *flowing with Milk and Honey*, things Useful and Delightful; if not to Paradise it self, of which 'tis said, that there *the Lord God made to grow every Tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, the Tree of Life also in the midst of the Garden*. And indeed, as the Author of it was Omniscient, so Experience has taught that he has so much expressed himself to be so in the Scripture, that the more Knowing its Pious Studiers have been, the greater store of Excellent Truths they have met with in it; the Scripture being indeed like Heaven, where the better our Eyes and Telescopes are, the more Lights we discover. And that this may not appear to be said *gratis*, let us consider, that a Book may be Instructive, as well by teaching its Readers Speculative Truths as Practical ones, and that Christians ought as well to know what God would have us think of Him & of his Works, as what

Gen. 2.9.

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he

he would have them Do. Now as it is past Question that there are no Speculative Truths of so Noble and Elevated a Nature as those that have God himself for their Object, so there is no Book from whence there is so much to be Learn'd, as there is from the Bible, of the Nature, and ev'n the Thoughts of God, and of those deep Mysteries into which, as I formerly noted from *St. Peter*, the Angels themselves are greedy of Pr'ying. Nay, there is no other Book whatsoever that Teaches us any thing at all, concerning divers of these sublime Subjects, that may be safely Rely'd on, save in what it is beholden to the Scripture for. So that we cannot without an extreme Injury look upon that Book as Barren, which alone contains all those reveal'd Truths, which are of so Noble and Precious a Nature, that we justly prize the Composures of Heathen Philosophers, and other Authors, for being enrich'd with GuesSES at some Few of them, though much embas'd by the Alloy whereto the Truths conjecturally deliver'd are made liable from the Imperfections of Writers, alwayes Fallible and for the most part in some degree

1 Pet. I. 12.

degree or other actually Erroneous. But of this more perchance elsewhere. Wherefore I shall now add, that whereas those we reason with, are pleas'd to prefer other Books of Morality and Devotion before the Scripture, in reference to good Life; They would probably be of another Mind, if they duely consider'd, that to engage Men to live well and Holily, there is much more Requisite than barely to tell them that they Ought to do so, and How they should do it. For since to lead a life truly vertuous, requires in many Cases that we Deny, and Overcome our Natural Appetites and Inclinations, and requires also Constancy in a course that is confessedly wont to be attended with many Hardships and Dangers, it is not sufficient to engage a Man to a Good life to give him Precepts of it; which do not so much (what is yet the main thing in this Case) Make men willing to conform to such Precepts, as Suppose them so. And he that can do no more, does far less than Him, who besides the Rules of good life, presents men the Highest, and the most prevalent Motives to embrace Piety and

Virtue, and the most Powerful Dissuasives from all that is Wicked, by proposing to us such Rewards and Punishments, and satisfying us, that we ought, according as we behave ourselves, to expect either the one, or the other; as to convince us that we cannot be either Wise or Happy, but by being Good, nor avoid the greatest of Miseries, but by avoiding Vice. Now as we shall see anon, that as to the Precepts of good life, the Bible is not unfurnish'd with them, so as to that most Operative part of the way of Teaching good life, the proposing of the most Prevalent Motives to Good, and the most powerful Dissuasives from Evil; not onely no other Book Does, but no Book not inspir'd, Can perform in that kind, any thing near so much as the Scripture alone. Since we have not the same Reason to believe any Meer Man, as we have to believe God touching those Rewards and Punishments which he reserves after Death for those that conform to, or disobey his Laws; these being Matters which, (whatever Philosophers and other Learned Men may have thought to the contrary,) depend upon his free Will,

Will, and consequently are not to be explicately Known, but by his Revelation; which he has not, that appears, vouchsaf'd us in any other Book than the Scripture. And therefore 'tis not to be wonder'd at, that *St. Paul* should ascribe it to our Saviour Christ, *That he had brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.* And whereas Hope is that Spur without which Men do scarce ever cheerfully Undertake, & resolutely Go Through, things much less difficult and dangerous than those which a Virtuous course of life is wont to expose men to, *St. Peter* makes a Christians highest Hope to depend upon a Revealed Truth, where he gives thanks to God for having, *according to his abundant Mercy, begot us to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.* And what Influence such a knowledge of God and Christ, as, if we have it at all, we must owe to the Scripture, and such Hopes and Promises as none but God himself, or those He sends, can give a wary and intelligent Person, may have upon good life, you may guess by that other Passage of the same Apostle, where not onely he mentions Gods having ac-

2 Tim.
ch. 1. v. 10

1 Pet. 1. 3

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2 Pet. 1.
3, 4.

cording to his Divine Power (or Efficacy) given unto us all things that pertain unto Life and Godliness through the Knowledge of him that hath called us to Glory and Virtue, But also immediately after speaks of our being made Partakers of the Divine Nature, and escaping the Corruption that is in the World through Lust, by those exceeding great and precious Promises that are given of God unto us. So that although the Scripture did not expressly give us such Moral Documents as Ethical Writers do, and taught us good life but by acquainting us with what God has reveal'd in those Writings concerning himself, and by convincingly proposing to us those highest Inducements to Embrace a Good, and Shun an Evil Life, which (though Reason may perchance make some weak and confus'd GuesSES at them,) Revelation onely can make Examining men confidently Depend upon. If, I say, the Scripture did no more than thus Engage us to Resolve upon a good life, leaving us to derive the Particular Precepts of Virtue from the inward Dictates of the Law of Nature, and the Exercise of our own Reason (which

(which two together may well teach us Almost as much as Ethical Books are wont to teach, of really and considerably Usefull) the Scripture ought yet to be esteem'd a most instructive Book in reference to Good Life! As in effect we see, that the Writings of no Philosopher or Orator ever made any thing near so many Persons so Virtuous as the New Testament, though but a Pocket Book, has been able to do, especially in those Primitive Ages of the Church, when those that receiv'd that Book were less diverted from it than since they have been, by the Reading of others. The Moon may in clear Weather lend a Gardiner Light enough to digg, and manure his Orchard, and perhaps to prune his Trees, but none will say that the Moon does as much contribute to his labouring to produce fruit as the Sun; since this Nobler Planet not only affords him Light to work by, and a comfortable Warmth whilst he is working, but animates him by the hopes he cherishes upon the Suns account, that in due Season his Diligence and Toyls shall be rewarded. The Application is too Obvious to need to be insisted on.

But though upon the fore-mention'd Accounts alone, the Scripture would deserve to be look'd upon as highly Conducive to the Practice of Piety, and Virtue, yet it is far from being true, that it is destitute of such Moral Documents, which it needs not, to deserve to be look'd upon as a Book very Instructive in Reference to good Life: For there being Two sorts of Virtues requisite to an Embracer of the Gospel, which have been conveniently enough call'd for Distinction sake, the one Christian, and the other Moral, or Ethical; I suppose it will not be doubted but that the Rules of those Virtues that are properly Christian, must be sought for in the Scripture, that being acknowledg'd by Protestants to have such a sufficiency as to matters of meer *Revelation*, (which Restriction too many do inconsiderately enough leave out) that in Matters of that Nature, Divines often Do, and in many Cases May, argue Negatively, as well as Affirmatively from the Scripture; which Eases us of many things obtruded as Duties, meerly by its not, either expressly, or by consequence, Imposing them upon us. So that as

to things of this Nature, there is such a Fulness in that Book, that oftentimes it says Much by saying Nothing, and not only its Expressions but its Silences are Teaching, (like a Dyal, in which the Shadow as well as the Light informs us.) Nor must we think, that the Bible is destitute of the Best sort of such Precepts, Exhortations, and Dissuasives, as we prize in Ethical Books, because they are not Express'd and Rang'd in the Bible, as they are wont to be in Systematical Composesures; For not only there is extant in the Scripture, to them that know how to Constellate those Lights, a very excellent Body of Moral Precepts, but there are likewise scatter'd the forciblest Motives to the several Duties, and the most retracting Dissuasives from the contrary Vices. And truly, it hath long lessen'd my Esteem of our Heathen Morals, that the Ethicks being but the Doctrine of Regulating our Passions and Directing our Faculties, in order to the Attainment of Felicity, they have been hitherto handl'd by those, to whom the Nature of the Faculties and Passions of the Mind was but very little known:

Whereas

VWhereas to the Author of the Scripture-Morals, the Frame and Springs, and Faculties of our souls, being Intuitively and most perfectly known; the most proper and Powerfull wayes of VWorking on them, cannot be unknown to him: and then certainly, one unacquainted with the Trade, will be much less likely to mend a VWatch, that's out of order, than a VWatch-maker. And indeed, ev'n in reference to that other sort of Virtues which are wont in the more confin'd sense of the VWord to be call'd Morall, there are I know not how Many excellent Notions and Directions relating to them, dispers'd up and down in the Scripture, though by Reason of their not being drawn up by themselves, and of their being mingl'd with other Matters, they are not so readily taken notice of by Ordinary Readers. VWhereas, those Studious Perusers that *search the Scriptures* with a due Diligence and Attention, are not only wont easily enough to descry the Moral Counsels and Prescriptions over-look'd by the other Readers; but take notice of many excellent Documents that are plainly enough Intimated or hinted there,

there, to knowing and diligent Perusers, though not clearly and expressly enough to be found of those that think them not worth seeking.

VWherefore, as to those Religious Persons mention'd in the last propos'd Objection, I cannot but think, that by neglecting the Scripture for Ethical Composures, or even Books of Devotion, they as well wrong Themselves as the Scripture; And therefore I shall take leave to think the worse, rather of the Practice of the Men, than of the Book of God. Scarce any thing has given me a favourabler Character of *Luther*, than his VVish, that all his Books of Devotion were burnt, when he once perceiv'd that the Peoples fondness and Over-valuation of them produc'd a Neglect of the study of the Bible; to which you will find, *Theophilus*, that the best of that Nature being compar'd, are but (not to draw to our present purpose that of *Seneca* to his Mother, *Paribus intervallis omnia Divina, ab omnibus Humanis distant*) like the Stars compar'd to the Sun, whose Emanations confer on them their Lustre, but whose Presence drowns it: For though I deny not Books of Devotion

*Seneca de
Conf. ad
Helviam.
cap. 9.*

Devotion a due Degree of Praise and Usefulness, yet I refuse them the Superlative degree of either; and since the Writers of the best of that kind of Compositures, either steal their best things from, or acknowledge that they Borrow'd them of the Bible, I would not have Christians neglect the Fountain for the Streams, and unwisely, as well as unthankfully, elect to Read Gods Word, rather in any Book than his own, in which to encourage us to study the Precepts of a Virtuous and Holy Life, we have such Peculiar and encouraging Invitations. ——— Saint Paul seems to make it the (End and the) Result of the several Usefulnesses he attributes to the Scripture, *That it can make the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all Good Works; and able,* (as he speaks a little higher) *Copyist eis owinetav, to Make us wise unto Salvation.* There are indeed many Excellent Instructions given us in other Books; but they giving us Directions, only towards the Attainment of the Advantages, Conveniences, and Ornaments of Life; the Ignorance of them, only makes us miss those Particular Ends, Whereto they give Addresses,

1 Cor. 15.

2 Tim. 3.
17.

dressess, or whereof they facilitate our Pursues; but the Knowledge, whose Acquist, or Neglect, imports Endless Joys or Torments, we need seek only from the Scripture: a Christian to understand the Duty of his Faith and Life, needing to understand no other Book than the Bible, though indeed to understand the Bible well, 'tis Ordinarily requisite, that a pretty Number of other Books be understood. Christians then have reason to Study most that Book, which Understood, all others are Needless to Salvation, and which Ignor'd, they are insufficient. If Saint Peters Vision had been a Reality, he would scarce, hungry as he was, have rang'd abroad to hunt in this Desert or that Forrest for Game, when he had a Vessel let down to him from Heaven, containing in its self all manner of four-footed Beasts, and other Objects of Appetite, attended with a Commanding Invitation from Heaven, *Rise, Peter, Kill, and Eat.* So when God sends us from Heaven in one Volume, an, at least Virtual, Collection of all those Divine Truths and Holy Precepts, others scatteringly and sparingly glean out of Human Books; the Christian

Acts 10.
11, 12, 13.

*Mikra,
Lectio.*

Christians cannot but prize a Book so Comprehensive, which by making it safe for him to ignore others, by so merited an *Antonomasia*, wears the Title of *The Book*, (for so the Bible signifies in Greek, as the *Hebrews* call it *Mikra*, which by Excellence signifies *what's to be Read.*) — — —

There are Precepts enough of Virtue, and Motives enough to Conform to them, held forth in the Bible, if the Contents of that Divine Book were Believ'd and Consider'd as they ought to be. 'Tis a mistake to think, that a large System of Ethicks, dissected according to the nice Prescriptions of Logick, and Methodically replenish'd with Definitions, Divisions, Distinctions, and Syllogisms, is Requisite or Sufficient to make men Virtuous. Too many of our Moralists write as if they thought Virtue could be taught as easily, and much in the same VVay, as Grammar: and leaving our Rational Motives to Vertue, and Determinents from Vice, with other things that have a Genuine Influence on the Minds and Manners of men, they fall to wrangle about the Titles and Precedencies of the Parts of Ethical Philosophy,

losophy, and things extrinsecal enough to Vice and Virtue: they spend more time in asserting their Method, than the Prerogatives of Virtue above Vice; they seem more solicitous how to order their Chapters than their Readers actions; and are more Industrious to impress their Doctrine on our Memories, than our Affections, and teach us better to dispute Of our Passions than VVith them. Whereas, as the Condition of a Monarch, who is possess'd but of one Kingdome or Province, is preferable to that of a Geographer, though he be able to Discourse Theorically of the Dimensions, Situation, and Motion; or Stability of the whole Terrestrial Globe; to carve it into Zones, Climates and Parallels, to enumerate the various Names and Etymologies of its various Regions, and give an Accompt of the Extent, the Confines, the Figure, the Divisions, &c. of all the Dominions and Provinces of it: so the Actual Possession of one Virtue, is preferable to the bare speculative Knowledge of them all. Their Master *Aristotle* hath herein been more plain and less Pedantick; who (by the favour of his Interpreters)

ters) hath not been Nice in the Method of his Ethicks. And indeed, but little Theory is essentially requisite to the being Virtuous, provided it be duely understood, and cordially put in practice: Reason and Discretion sufficing, analogically to extend and apply it to the Particular Occurrences of Life; (which otherwise being so near Infinite, as to be Indefinite, are not so easily specifiable in Rules:) as the View of the Single Pole-starr directs the heedfull Pilot, in almost all the Various Courses of Navigation. And the Systems of Moralists may (in this particular) not unfitly be compar'd to Heaven, where there are Luminaries and Stars obvious to all Eyes, that diffuse Beams sufficient to Light us in most wayes; And as I that with Modern Astronomers, by an Excellent Telescope, have beheld perhaps near a hundred Stars in the Pleiades, where common Eyes see but six; and have often discern'd in the Milky-way, and other pale parts of the Firmament, Numberless little Stars generally unseen, receive yet from Heav'n no more Light useful to Travel by, than other Men enjoy: so there are certain

Grand

Grand Principles and Maxims in the Ethicks, which both are generally Conspicuous, and generally afford men much Light and much Direction; but the Numerous little Notions, (admit them Truths) suggested by Scholarship to Ethical Writers, and by them to us, though the Speculation be not unpleasant, afford us very little peculiar Light to guide our Actions by. When I remember those Antient Heroes, that have ennobled Secular, and are ennobled by Sacred Story; and whose Examples suggested the Precepts of Virtue, before there were any Written ones to conform to; I am tempted to say, that Virtue was scarce ever better practis'd, than whilst men had not yet talk'd of the Definition of it: (as many an Alchymist begs with rare Notions of the Nature of Gold, which fills the Coffers of Merchants that never saw Mine nor Furnace.) The Grand Precepts of Morality are fruitfull Seeds, which industriously Cultivated, will bring forth Fruits still affording other Seeds. And as for the Motives to Pious, and Disquisitions from sinful Practices, though out of the Many voluminous Books of

Morality, there may be divers collected, not extant in the Bible; yet may a dextrous Reader find in that Heav'nly Book, many more Invitations to Virtue, and Determents from Vice, than most men are aware of; and some of them of an Importance that renders One of them as much more considerable than many Ordinary ones, as One fair Pearl out of a Jewellers Shop, out-values a score of those little Pearls that Druggists sell by the Ounce; or doth comprize many Inferior Inducements, (which Wise men judge not of by Tale but Value) as a Piece doth twenty Shillings. And though Human Authors do often in their Parenetical Treatises allow themselves to be lavish in Ornaments, to expatiate into Amplifications, and to drein Common-places; yet whilst they want an intimate Admission, all these are too often unable to reform, I say not those that Read them, but ev'n those that Write them: whereas the Experience of the Primitive and Heroical Ages of the Church, does gloriously manifest, that the Inducements and Dissuasives held forth in the Bible, though destitute of those Embellishments and Advantages,

vantages, where they are Conscionably entertain'd, and Seriously ponder'd, are sufficient to raise Virtue to a Pitch, Philosophy durst scarcely aim at. Nor indeed is the number Great, of pertinent and Rational Incitements, or Determents, relating to Virtue; and in Discourses that have Them for Theme, how farr soever the Bowes may extend, yet generally the Knot lyes in a little Compass: and the Analyser that shall crack many of those Composures, having sever'd the Shels, shall find their Kirnells to be much alike. What this Writer compares to one thing, that Writer likens to another: those Ungratefull Persons to God, that one resembles to Swine, who eat the Acorns without ever looking up to the Tree they fall from, another compares to Cattel that drink of the Streams, without considering what Fountain they flow from. These but present us several Dresses of Virtue and Vice, where though the Novelty and Variety of Habit, serve to engage Attention in all, and want not Influence (at least) upon Easie and flexible Natures, yet in Considerate and discerning Persons, they alter not much

the Notion under which the Qualities themselves are entertain'd. Nor will such be apt to quarrel with the Author of the Scripture; because the Motives and Dissuasives extant there, are many of them Old and Known, or frequently Repeated; the efficacy of them being so too. Were it not strange, a Physician should decline exhibiting of Mithridate, because 'twas a Known Medicine, and famous for its Cures many Ages since? Doth Bread less Nourish us, or is it less Us'd, because 'twas (as men suppose) contemporary to *Adam*, and the most Common food of all Nations in all Ages? and (as to the Repetition of the same Allegations and Inducements, as often as Men's Condition return'd to need them) the Paucity of ponderous Considerations in the Ethicks, often necessitating either (Disguiz'd perhaps, yet) Repetitions of the same, or the substitution of those that must be much Inferiour to be New; such Persons as little admire that reiterated Employment of the same Truths, as they would to see a Souldier use a Sword, though he and Legions many Ages before him, have constantly made most use of that

Weapon;

Weapon, or a General encourage his Engaging Souldiers by representing to them Honour, Duty, Spoil, Necessity, and those other known Topicks us'd by himself at the Head of his Army, as often as he had occasion to lead it on to fight. To all this I am invited by this occasion to subjoin, that upon the score of Gods being both an Omniscient Spirit and the supreme Law-giver to the whole Creation, the same Truths, Counsels, Exhortations, Dissuasions, &c. Oftentimes Have, and Always Ought to have, another-ghe's Efficacy, and Prevalence on a Christian Reader, when he finds them in the Scripture, than if he should meet with the same in the Books of Heathen Moralists, though Learned and Eloquent. And certainly, those that with such Reverence read the Writings of those great Wits of Antiquity, that have made the greatest Discoveries of Truth, because they believe them, to have been endowed with very Illuminated Intellectuals, ought to pay them and a Book published by an Omniscient Enditer, a Reverence somewhat proportionate to the Disparity of their Authors. Since Men (as

Eliha speaks in *Job*) are but of yesterday , and know little or nothing ; A wary Person reads the Wifest Authors , with a Reflection , that they may Deceive him by being themselves deceiv'd ; and undergoes a Double labour , the one in Investigating the Meaning , and the other in Examining the Truth of what they deliver : but in the Bible , we are eas'd of the latter of these Troubles ; for if we find the Sense of a Text of Scripture , we cannot miss a Truth ; being never deceiv'd by that Book , but when we deceive our selves by presuming we understand it , when indeed we do not. I am otherwise affected to find the Vanity of the World proclaim'd and depretiated by him , that enjoy'd all the Delights and Glories of it , than when I meet with the same Truth from some Beggerly Cynick , that never was admitted to tast those luscious and bewitching Pleasures , and needs no great Philosophy to despise a World , he judges of by the scant share the Narrowness of his Condition allows him of the Joyes of it : and of which (consequently) his Criminations should as little move , as a Blindman's

of

of a Black-more ;ⁱ whom though he may (perchance) Truly style ugly, yet he were of a somewhat easie Faith , that should think her so , barely upon the Testimony of so incompetent a Witness. Thus when God himself is pleas'd to reveal what is Vice or Virtue , Sublime or Despicable , Truth or Falshood , Happiness or Misery , I have an other-guess Acquiescence in his Decisions , than in the same met with in an humane Author , who having necessarily Frailties and Passions , is both obnoxious to Mistake , and capable to Deceive. And therefore , 'tis no wonder that the slighting of God's Dictates , should receive an Aggravation upon the score of their being His ; as our Saviour gave the Precedency of the *Ninivites* convetted by *Jonah* , to them that repented not at his Preaching , because he was *A greater than Jonah*. And therefore , though I have formerly been no very negligent Peruser of Books of Morality ; yet knowing that they have a Power but to Perswade , not to Command , and that the Penalties of Sin or Death are not inseparably annex to the Disobedience of their Prescriptions , I confess ,

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Mat. 12.
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I often find my self but faintly wrought on by them. For I must acknowledge, that frequently assuming the Liberty of questioning the Reasonableness of what Human Writers ; (whether Philosophers or Fathers) are pleas'd to impose upon us ; I find those specious and boasted Allegations , the Apothegms of the Sages , the Placits of the Philosophers, the Examples of Eminent Persons , the pretty Similes, quaint Allegories , and quick Sentences of fine Wits , I find all these Topicks I say , such two-edg'd Weapons , that they are as well applicable to the service of Falshood , as of Truth , and may by ready Wits be brought Equally to countenance Contrary Assertions. And really , most Moralists , except in those few Duties, that Nature her self hath fore-taught us , to a man whose restless Curiosity leads his Enquiries to all Times and Nations ; will appear little other than Fencers with Wit , (I mean those that have any) for each of these Popular Topicks , is such an Unsolid or uncertain Foundation , that one man can Build little on it , that an equally able Antagonist may not with as specious

cious Probability Over-throw : and I fear , most of us have but too often found our Corruptions Sophisters enough to elude any such thing that press'd That as a Duty , which They had no mind we should perform. But when I find any thing enjoyn'd in the Scripture , my Consciousness to its being impos'd by that *Father of Spirits* , (who has both Right to enact Heb. 12. 9. Laws , which must be therefore Just , because he enacts them ; and Power to punish the Transgression of them , with no less than Eternal Death ;) I then leave Roving , and see where to cast Anchor ; I think it my part without Disputing them to Obey his Orders , and acquiesce more in that imperious *αὐτοκράτωρ* , *Thus saith the Lord* , than in a whole Dialogue of *Plato* , or an Epistle of *Seneca* I therefore love to build my Ethicks , (as well as my Creed) upon the Rock , and esteeming nothing but the true , proper , and strict sense of the Scripture , (and what is convincingly deducible from it) to be indispensably Obligatory , either as (in matters of meer Revelation) to Faith or Practice ; it is no wonder , if I study God's Will most in that Book , wherein alone

alone I think it Reveal'd; and, truly, finding in my self no Motive more justly prevalent to Obedience, than his Right to exact it that requires it; few men are more ready than I, in distinguishing what indeed God sayes, from what Man would make him say. And if I allow my self such liberty to discern the Text from the Gloss, in the Writings of our Vulgar Interpreters, (of most of whose Comments, for reasons prosecuted in another Paper, I am no great Idolater) and ev'n of the Fathers of the Church; I hope I shall not need to tell, *Theophilus*, that in all other Moralists I like the freedom to Like or Disapprove, as upon Examination, my impartiallest Reason relishes them; or that I frequently fear, their Harangues will hardly pass for Demonstrations, with those Wary Testers, that like not to be Cheated, so much as into Virture, but chuse to act as Rational or Christians, as well in relation to the Inducements, as to the Nature of what they do.

Amongst the thirteen Articles of the Jewish Creed, one acknowledges the very Expressions of the Law, (or Pentateuch) to have

have been inspir'd by God. That saying of the Rabbins is not altogether so Hyperbolic, as a perfunctory Reader would imagine, That upon each Tittle of the Law, whole Mountains (of Doctrine) hang. I shall not mention as any proof of this, the strange Mysteries they fancy in the strange Accenting of the Ten Commandments in the Original, since their soberer Doctors have in free Discourse confess'd to me, that 'tis as much a Riddle to Them as Us. Nor shall I insist upon the Jews reducing the whole Law to 613. Precepts, Affirmative and Negative, according to the Number of the Letters of the Decalogue, thereby insinuating, that all the Laws that regulate Mans Duty are Virtually or Reductively compriz'd there. Although this Rabbinical Notion, (not to call it Whimsy,) be in such Request among them, and so Known to those that are any thing conversant in Jewish Authors, that I have sometimes suspected that the Conceit entertain'd by so many Christian Divines, that All the Precepts that relate to any part of the whole Duty of man, are but just Consequences deducible from the Decalogue,

calogue, had its Rise thence. But I shall not, as I said, ground my Opinion of the Pregnant instructiveness of the Scripture, upon such Questionable, not to say altogether Proofless, Conceits. That which may better persuade a considering Man, is, that besides those more Resplendent and Obvious Truths, wherewith the Scriptures does evidently abound, There are many Instructions Exhibited, many Truths asserted, many Errors confuted, and many Mysteries hinted in the very Expressions of holy Writ, to an Inquisitive and concern'd Peruser, which a Heedless vulgar Reader is not wont to take Notice of. God, who in the Scripture is said, *to cover himself with Light as with a Garment*; justifies that Expression in the Scripture, where (as the first Words that he is recorded to have ever spoken were יְהי אור *Ye-hi-or, Let there be Light*) the very Words and Phrases, that cloath the sense, are not alone Emphatical, but oftentimes Mysterial. The Apostle assures us, *whatsoever things were written, ev'n in the Old Testament, were written, for our Learning*: But yet besides those many particular Sentences of the Bible, that

Psal. 104.
2.

Gen. I. 3.

Rom. 15.
1.

that are not Destitute of Instructions, there are some so Pregnant with them, that we may easily find this Difference betwixt Them and Human Writings, That those first mention'd contain more Matter than Words, and the Other more Words than Matter. Nay, many of the very Flowers of Rhetorick growing there, have (like the Mary-gold that in hot Countries points at the Sun) a Virtue of hinting the usefulest and the sublimest Truths: the Bible being in this like the Tree of Life, (flourishing in the New *Jerusalem*) which not only afforded seasonable fruit, but of which the very *Leaves were* *Rev.* 22.
for the healing of the Nations. As for those, who have in this and the last Age made bold to depreciate the Old Testament, by pretending, that to Christians, the New is sufficient; I am at present apt to think, that the Doctrine of the Gospel, together with the Light of Nature, (which it Excludes not) but rather Supposes, contains all those Duties which are absolutely Necessary to be perform'd by all Christians, in order to Salvation. And that consequently, many Divines both Catholicks and Reformed, do inconsiderately enough press

press many things enacted in the Old Testament, as Laws properly so call'd which are not now upon the Score of their being There enacted, Obligatory to Us Christians, nor perhaps ever were to any but the Jews and some kind of Jewish Profelytes. But I think withall, that though it be hard to shew that any thing is a Necessary Duty to Christians, in the sense above declar'd, if it cannot be shewn to be so either by the New Testament, or the Light of Nature: Yet not only there are many Particulars relating to such Duties, of which the Old Testament may excellently assist us to give our selves a more Distinct and Explicit Instruction, than is easie to be collected from the New; but of the Mysteries of our Religion, there are many things deliver'd more Expressly or more Fully in some Passages of the Old Testament, than in any of the Gospel, as I could easily evidence, if I thought it requisite. So that the use of it is very Great, as to the *Credenda* in Divinity, though not perhaps absolutely Necessary as to the *Agenda*. But I consider further, that both the Matters and the Expressions made use of in the Old Testament,

Testament, are so very frequently and almost upon all Occasions related to in the New, (as if the Wisdom of God were like Rivers and Seas that affect to flow in the same Channels themselves had made before) that there is scarce a Page of the Latter, to the better Understanding of which the Study of the Former is not either absolutely Necessary, or at least highly Usefull. Should God be pleas'd to Instruct us as he did *Jonas*, by the Shadow of a Weed, *Jonah 4. 6.* 'twere our Duty to acquiesce; how much more then, when he vouchsafes to speak to us in almost as Glorious a Manner as he did to *Moses*; in a Scripture that hath such Resemblances to the Sanctuary, which contain'd the Law of God, exhibited the Mercy-seat, (the Type of Christ) and wherein the two Golden Cherubims, like the two Pretious and Harmonious Testaments, look'd towards one another, and both towards that Mercy-seat, that Typify'd the *Messias*? We should therefore, not only with Acquiescence, but Gratitude, look upon God's having Appointed the Scripture to be the Light in which his Spirit regularly Shines upon his Church, since the Luminary is

*Exod. 25.
16, 17, 18,
19, 20, 21,
22.*

is as well Refulgent, as the Choice of it, His, whose Blessing can Prosper any Means of Grace, as without his Blessing no Means of Grace can Prosper.

And, *Theophilus*, since among those that are so farr mistaken, as to postpone the study of the Bible to that of some applauded Books of Morality and Devotion, there are not wanting divers Persons otherwise eminently Religious; I hope you will easily excuse me, if for fear their Example should prove a Temptation to you, and add to the Discouragements you must expect from the Darknes of some Texts, and the Opposition that will be given you; especially at first, by the grand Enemy to the Author and Design of the Scripture, I venture to superadd to all that I have said already concerning these Mens Practice, That 'tis not onely a Commendable, but a much more Improving Custome than 'tis by many thought, to Read daily and orderly some set Portion or Chapters of the Bible: and not to desist from that Practice, though (as *Naaman* dipped himself six times in *Jordan*, without being Cur'd) we should not perceive a sudden and sensible Benefit accruing from

2 Kings 5.
34.

from it. For in Diseases (Bodily or Spiritual) though the Mouth be out of Taste, and cannot relish what is taken in, yet wholesome Aliments must be eaten, and do effectively Nourish and strengthen, though they be then Insipid, (perhaps Bitter) to the distemper'd Palate. We must with the Eunuch Read divers Texts we Understand not when we read them; and though at first we be not able to penetrate the senses of some Portions of Gods Word, we must at least make our Faculties as Hospitable to it as we can; and make our Memories Admit and Embrace it, till our Understandings be grown up to do the like: it becoming the Disciples of our Saviour, herein to imitate His Holy Mother; of whom 'tis written, that *They* (the Blessed Virgin and her Husband) *understood not the Sayings which he spake un'o them, — but His Mother kept all these Sayings in her Heart;* and to think it may very well be, that as our Saviour said to *Peter*, *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;* so by the Welcome he disposes you to give his Word into your Memory, he says to you, *What I*

Act. 8. 30.
31.

Luk 2.
50, 51.
see v. 18.
19.
Joh 1 13.
7.

M

say

say thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter: and the Apostles Motive to Hospitality, Be not forgetful to entertain Strangers, for thereby some have entertained Angels unawares, will without being over-stretch'd, take in the Texts of Scripture we are unacquainted with: for we may easily in them, entertain with *Abraham* and *Lot*, greater Guests than we were aware of: and who when their true Condition appears, may recompence our Entertainment of them, by showing Blessings on us, and rescuing us from the Company and Destiny of the Wicked. And sure, if the Pagans layd up with awful Reverence, those Dark and Squinting Oracles, that came (at least many of them) from the Prince of Darkness, and Father of Lies; we should blush to refuse attentive Perusals, and Lodging in our Memories, to those *λόγια ζώντα*, those *Lively Oracles*, those *λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *Oracles of God* who is the *Father of Lights*, and an Essential Truth *That cannot Lye*. And the most ænigmatical Texts we meet with, which seem meant purposely to Pose us, we may make useful Admonitors of our Weaknesses, and

Heb. 13.2.

Gen. 18.
and Gen.
19.Aët. 7.38.
Rom. 3.2.
James 1.
17.
Tit. 1.2.

and take for welcome Opportunities, to evince how great a Reverence we pay God's Word, upon the single Score of its being so. Nor let those Disturbances, with which the Devil seldom fails to obstruct or discourage our first Progress in a Study, so ruinous to his malicious Ends upon us, deter us; for these are commonly but the Throws and strugglings of *Christ* new formed in us; or else like those horrid Fits and Out-cries which preceded the Ejection of that Unclean Spirit mention'd in the first of *Mark*: *such Parting Ceremonies being not unusual to the dislodging Devil; who when he finds himself upon the Point of being expell'd, Hath Great Wrath, because he knoweth, he hath but a short time. And though the God of Peace* how ever he *will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*: should for a while Try us even with Desertions in the Study of the Scripture; let us not for all that Desert so Improving a Study, but resolutely persevere in the constant and faithful use of the Means of Grace: as the Moon when she suffers an Eclipse, forsakes not her Orb or Motion, but by continuing her unretarded

M 2 Course,

Mat. 1.23.

Rev. 12.
12.Rom. 16.
20.

Course, regains the Irraditions she was depriv'd of. We find the Word of God compar'd to feed, (that deathless *Seed* by which Saint *Peter* saith we are *born again*) and That, we know may seem for a long time as well Dead as Buri'd in the ground, and yet afterwards spring and grow up into a plentiful Harvest. Nor must our Proficiency any more dispense with us, from the being conversant with the Scripture, than our Frailties: *I will never* (saith the Psalmist) *forget thy Precepts, for with them thou hast quickned me.* And indeed, the Word of God is not to be used like active Physick, taken Once that it may not be taken Again; but 'tis compar'd to Food, which indeed it is, of the Soul; in which Sense it may be literally, enough said, *that Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.* Now as our having fed never so well and heartily on excellent and Nutritive meats Yesterday, will not keep us from needing to eat again To-day, or to-Morrow, and so Daily, as long as we continue in these ruinous *Cottages of Clay*; so in Spiritual refectons with Full, without

Repeated

Math. 13.
19, 20, &c.
1 Pet. 1.
2, 3.

Psal. 119.
93.

1 Pet. 2. 2.
and else-
where.
Mat. 4. 4.

Job 4. 19.

Repeated meals the Soul will scarcely thrive. And as, generally, the more Healthy and Lusty Men are, the frequenter and stronger Appetites they have; so the best Christians, and (witness *David*) the greatest Proficients in Scripture-Knowledge, have the keenest Stomachs to this Food of Souls; and the vigorousst Piety, by a Desuetude and Neglect of it, is subject to Faint and Pine away. Nor have we just cause to repine at any Engagement to Assiduity in the Scriptures; for there are not near so many things that will Require, as there are that will Deserve and Recompence a serious Study in a Book; where both the strict Sense and the Circumstances, and Expressions, that cloath it, are richly Instructive: like that Aromatic Fruit, of which not onely the Kernel is a Nutmeg, but the very involving Skinn is Mace. This inexhausted Fulness, occasion'd that Panegyricall Precept of the Rabbies concerning the Law; *הפוך כה והפוך בה ארו כולי בה* *Turn it over, and again turn it over, for All is in it:* Concurrently to which the Jew that Translates the Arabian Apopthegms into Hebrew,

M 3

thus

T. 102h
d. 102h
d. 102h
Athanas.

Pirk
avoth.
cap. 5.

thus pronounces; *There proceedeth not a true Sentence out of the Mouths of this Worlds Wise-men, that is not intimated in our Law.*

The Usefulness of Divers Texts, is such, that we should not onely have them in our Possession, but in a Readiness; and as *David* distress'd by his Mortal Enemies, took *Goliath's* Sword from near the Ephod, to wear it whither soever he went; so Christians prosecuted by Ghostly Enemies, should be diligent, not onely to have an Armory well furnished with spiritual Weapons, but to wear this *Sword of the Spirit* always by their sides, to Ward and Thrust with upon all Occasions; without needing to depend upon any such things as Concordances, which often cannot be come by, and oftner, not Soon enough to keep us from being foyld by the Father or the Champions of Lies. But now, to engage us to grow ready Scripturists: it is not onely true, That as the Texts of the Bible interchange Light with one another, and every new Degree of Scripture-Knowledge, is not only an Acquist of so much, but an Instrument to acquire more; so is that

Book

Ephes. 6.
17.

Book a Theme so Comprehensive and so Fertile, that the last hour of a Christians longest and industriouesest Life, will still leave undiscover'd Mysteries in it: This, I say, is not only true, but it is also true, That the Doctrines of it are of that Importance, and find that Opposition in our depraved Nature, that even those Truths that require but few Perusals to be understood, require many to be duly Impress'd. Our posterously partial Memories, being rarely like Quick-silver, wherein nothing will sink but (that pretiouesest of Metals,) Gold: for that alone is heavier than Mercury. *The Word of Christ*, must not be as a Passenger, or sparingly entertain'd in our Minds, but must *Dwell* there, and that *Richly*: and the Word, which Saint *James* pronounces, *able to save our Souls*, he describes as a Graff, which must not onely be closely embrac'd. By that, wherein it is to Fructifie, but must continue There, To bring the Stock and Graff to (if I may so speak) Concorporate. And indeed, we are so indispos'd to Admit, and so obnoxious to Deface, Religious Impressions, that we need, during our whole Life, be

Col. 3. 16.

Jam. 1. 21

conversant with the Precepts of Leading it piously. — But 'tis scarce more Faulty in, than Incident to, the froward Nature of Man, to be ever Quarrelling with Gods Method of prosecuting his intentions; and, (as if he were Wiser than his Maker,) to criminate his Conduct in his Dispen-sations. Even that Excellent Person, the Gloriously of Virgins, and of Mothers, whom all Ages must deservedly call *Blessed*, incurr'd her Divine Sons Reprehension, for an intimated offer to alter his purposed Method in Disclosing himself. But God is too Just to Himself, and too Merciful to Us, to Degrade (as it were) his Omniscience so far as to suffer himself to be sway'd against the Dictates of it, by such Purblind and perverse Tutors as We; his Goodness concerns him too much in our Instruction, to suffer him to let our Phantasies endite his Word; to attain his own Ends, he makes choice of his own Means and Instruments, without needing our purblind Eyes in the Election, and what with unfathomable Wisdom he hath been pleas'd to contrive for Mans Instruction with a Gracious, though often Mis-

Luk 1. 48.
John 2. —
3. 4.

Mis-understood Constancy he persists in. He knows that many, who are dispos'd to Cavil at the present Contrivance or Stile of Scripture, would be apt to take Exceptions at any other: for some thing or other it must necessarily be; and the unimaginable Diversity of Humours, Judgements, and Prepossessions is such, that as These now say, why Thus, and not So, others would in case of alteration be as ready to ask, Why so, and not Thus. 'Tis questionable, whether the Israelites were greater Murmurers at *Pharaoh* in *Egypt*, or at *Moses* in the Desert: and the Children complain'd of by their Companions in the Market-place, have had either Posterity or Predecessors in all Ages; which have still been of the Disposition of those Jews, who imputed the More than Prophets Rigidness of Virtue, to the great Enemy of that lovely Quality; and the Greater than *Solomon's* Condescensions to the Vices he design'd them to destroy. But the Great Physician of Mankind is too Compassionate and Wise, to let his distracted Patients prescribe their own Course of Physick; Or, to decline our fond and peevish Cavils, shuffle or dis-

Mat. 11.
16, 17, 18,
19.

compose

compose those Mysterious and Pro-
found Contrivances, whose Wisdome
engages the Attention, and exacts the
Wonders of those Heavenly unclog'd
Spirits, that are scarce more advan-
tag'd over us by their Native Abili-
ties, than by the means they have of
improving them. And therefore, our
Saviour refus'd to Descend from the
Cross, though they whose Malice
serv'd to fix him there, (the Chief
Priests and Scribes themselves,) de-
clar'd that on those Terms they would
believe on him. And though, we are
(but too) apt to fancy, that we should
be wonn to our Duty, if it were
taught or press'd in such or such a way,
yet we may be pleas'd to remember,
that 'twas one in Hell, that would
needs have another means than the
Scripture, of having Sinners Preach'd
to; and one in Heaven, that, referring
them to the Scripture, declar'd; *That if
men heard not Moses and the Prophets,
neither would they be perswaded, though
one rose from the Dead to preach to them.*

If I address what I write, not to so
Intelligent a Person as *Theophilus*, but
to Promiscuous Readers, I should add
to what I have said of the several Ex-
ceptions

ceptions against the Scripture, a Cor-
dial Advice to all, whose Parts and
Leisure give them not a just Hope of
being able solidly to vindicate it either
to themselves or others, to Decline as
much as discreetly they can, the List-
ning to Objectors or Objections, of
what sort, or under what Disguise so-
ever, against that Heavenly Book;
especially, if propos'd by plausible and
insinuating Wits. For it not being
Necessary, (nor indeed Possible) for
every Private Christian, to know the
Opinions and Reasons of all Dissenters
about the Scripture, (no more than
for every Traveller to be a Geogra-
pher;) nor requisite to the Knowledge
of the Way to Heav'n, to know all
those, in which they that miss it,
Wander; (as to learn the way from
Dover to *London*, I need not learn those
that lead not thither:) it is not Pru-
dent to run a very probable Hazard
of Disquieting one's Faith, and a not
improbable one of Subverting it, only
to gratifie a needless Curiosity; an
Itch, which we are delighted to have
scratc'd, but which is exasperated by
being so. And frequently, though
your Design seem Innocent, (as only
to

1 Pet. 1.

72.

Mat. 27.

42.

Luk 16.

31.

to Hear without Believing, and please your self with something of Wit and Novelty;) yet these Conversations rarely enough prove Harmless; and (as too frequent and sad Experience proclaims) generally either abate a Degree of your Faith, or Qualifie some Ardor of your Love, or Lessen your Reverence for that Matchless Book, or put some strange and disquieting Scruples into your Thoughts, which 'tis much easier to Confute than to Silence. Wherefore, as in Infectious Times, when the Plague reigns, Physicians use more strictly to forbid the smaller Excesses and Inordinacies of Dyet, and the use of Meats of ill Digestion, or apt to breed any Distemper; because every petty Fever, becomes through the Malignity of the Air, apt to turn into the Plague: so now, that Antiscripturism grows so rife, and spreads so fast, I hope 'twill not appear Unseasonable to advise those, that tender the Safety and Serenity of their Faith, to be more than ordinarily shy of being too Venturous of any Books, or Company, that may derogate from their Veneration of the Scripture; because by the Predomi-

nant

nant and Contagious Profaneness of the Times, the least injurious Opinions Harbor'd of it, are prone to degenerate into irreligion. But I fear, you'll think I Preach.

The eighth and last Objection.

And now, *Theophilus*, I am arriv'd at that part of this Discourse, wherein it will be fit to Examine that Grand Objection against the style of the Scripture, which, though a Philosopher would not look upon it as the most Considerable, is yet most urg'd by many of its Witty Adversaries; especially such as are wont to Exercise and Gratifie their Phansie more than their Reason. The Objection it self is this, *That the Scripture is so unadorn'd with Flowers of Rhetorick, and so destitute of Eloquence, that it is flat, and proves commonly inefficacious upon Intelligent Readers. Insomuch, that divers great Wits and great Persons, especially States-men, do either Despise it, or neglect to study it;* And truly, the Story is famous of that Cardinal, (who flourish'd in the last Age) that said, That once indeed he had read the Bible, but if he were

to

to do so again, 'twould lose him all his Latinity. And amongst those great Orators, (as they thought themselves) who liv'd in the same Age and Country that he did, the Complaint was ordinary, That the Reading of the Bible untaught them the Purity of the Loman Language, and corrupted their Ciceronian Style. And I remember no obscure Prince, (though he shall here be nameless, because for other Qualities I honour him) in no obscure Company, disputed with me one day, an Opinion about the Style of the Scripture, to which the Cardinals Scorn was a Complement. I wish these sawcy Expressions were but Outlandish, and could not cross those Seas that environ *England*; (which is not so happily sever'd from the Worlds Vices, as from its Continent,) This profane judging so boldly that Book, Men shall be judg'd by, being, if not a Native, yet at least a free Denizon of *England*; For not only 'twas one, that I am sorry I can call our Countrey-man, who is recorded to have solemnly preferr'd one of the Odes of *Pindarus*, before all the *Psalms* of *David*; but I could easily add divers resembling Instances,

Instances, that I have my self been troubl'd to meet with, were it not that I somewhat doubt whether this kind of prophane Sayings be not as well Fitter as Worthier to be Forgotten than Remember'd, and to be Suppress'd than Divulg'd; For (not to mention that the recording of such Enormities puts an ill Complement upon Mankind) the Satisfaction some Men's Curiosities receive by such Relations, will scarce account for the Temptation it gives others, to imitate what they find some have dar'd. For there are some Sins whose grand Determent is a kind of Perswasion, that they are too Horrid to have been committed: and some Wise Legislators thought it better against certain Crimes, to use the Silence of the Laws, than their Threats. I shall therefore, without any further Mention of scandalous Particularities, take it for granted, that there have been, and are but too many Witty Disrespecters of the Scripture. But as for the Accusation itself, which they are alledg'd to countenance, many Defences might be here made against it, if divers Considerations pertinent to that purpose among others,

others, did not belong to some of those ensuing Parts of my Discourse, wherein 'tis not the Style of the Scripture, but other Themes that are principally and Directly treated of. Yet that You may be assisted to referr hither such Parts of the following Discourse, as are Applicable to the matter under Consideration, I shall here take Notice to You, that my Answers to the Objection above propos'd, may for the most part be reduc'd to these five heads of Argument.

First, That as to divers parts of the Scripture, it was not requisite that they should be Adorn'd with Rhetorical Embellishments.

Next, That the Bible seems to have much less Eloquence than indeed it has, to those that Read it only in Translations, especially the vulgar Latine Version.

Thirdly, That by reason of the differing Notions, several sorts of Men, especially of distant Nations and Climates, have of Eloquence; many Passages that are thought Uneloquent by Us, may appear Excellently express'd to another part of Mankind.

Fourthly, That there are in the
Scripture

Scripture a multitude of those Texts, wherein the Author thought fit to employ the Ornaments of Language, conspicuously adorn'd with such as agree ev'n with our Notions of Eloquence.

And Lastly, that it is very farr from being consonant to Experience, that the Style of the Scripture does make it Unoperative upon the Generality of its Readers, if they be not Faultily Indispos'd to receive Impressions from it.

As to the first of these, having Already above declar'd, that there are many parts of Scripture, wherein it would have been Improper to affect Eloquence; I am willing to suppose, that You have not yet forgot what has been formerly said. And therefore, I am unwilling to detain You on this first consideration. Yet I cannot but on this Occasion take Notice to You, that we allow all sorts of people Expressions proper and fitted to their several Professions and Themes. How many of us can dwell on Lawyers, Physicians, and Chymists Books, though oftentimes written in Terms as harsh and as uncourtly, as if those
N Rude-

Rudenesses were their Design ? and yet we can Neglect and scorn the Scripture because in some Passages we there find the Mysteries and other Matters of Religion, deliver'd in a Proper and Theological style. I remember *Macchiavel*, in the Dedication of his famous Prince, after he had (not *causelessly*) acknowledg'd to *Lorenzo de Medici*, (to whom his Book is address'd) that he had not stuff'd it with lofty Language, or big Words, nor Adorn'd it with any of those enveagling outward Ornaments, usual to other Authors in their Writings; gives this account of the Plainness of his style, [*Perche io ho voluto, o ch  veruna cosa la honori (la mia opera) o che solamente la verit  della materia, & la gravit  del soggetto la faccia grata*] that he thought fit either that nothing at all should recommend his Work, or that the only truth of the Discourse and the Dignity of the subject should make it acceptable, and exact its welcome. If a meer Statesman, writing to a Prince, upon a meer civil Theme, could reasonably talk thus : with how much more Reason may God expect a welcoming Entertainment for the least Adorn'd parts of a Book,

Book, of which the Truth is a direct Emanation from the Essential and Supreme Truth, and of which the Contents concern no less than mans Eternal Happiness or Misery ? And if our nice Italian Criticks themselves, cannot by the Plainness of *Macchiavel's* style, nor the forbidding of his Writings by the Inquisition, be deterr'd from as Assiduous as Prohibited a Study of his Books; what Excuse will they one day have, that now make the Unaffected Style of Scripture the sole Excuse of their Despising, (or at least neglecting) that Divine Book ?

Secondly, As to the Disadvantage the Scripture receives by its not being read by those I now reason with, in its Originals; though I have said something to it already, yet I must now resume it into Consideration, and represent, That 'tis no wonder they reverence not the Bible's Style, as they Ought, whilst they judge of that of an Hebrew Book by their Vulgar Translation; which (though sometimes causelessly enough censur'd by divers Protestant Divines, that would find it no easie Task to make a better, yet) certainly is in many Places strangely

The second Answer to the eighth Objection.

Harsh and Barbarous; and by a Partial and unlucky affectation of Literality, misseth the Propriety both of the Hebrew Speech, and of the Latine: and to adhere to the Originals Words commonly injures its Eloquence, and oftentimes its Sense; rendring excellent Expressions in such Ungracefull ones, as would probably fright Readers from it, if it could not very well spare Fine Language: so that to our present Theme, we may not ill apply that Notable saying of *Mirandula*; *Hebraei bibunt fontes, Graeci rivus, Latini paludes*. The Old French Riming Translation of *Virgil*, makes not the *Aeneids* much more Eloquent than *Hopkins* and *Sternhold* have made the *Psalms*: which sure being Written by a Person who (setting aside his Inspiration) was both a Traveller, a Courtier, and a Poet, must at least be allow'd to contain polish'd and fashionable Expressions in their own Language, how coarsely soever they have been mis-rendred in Ours. What Opinion the Eastern World hath of the sweet singer of *Israel*, may appear, both by other Hyperbolical Fictions they believe of him, (whom with *Moses*, *Jesus*,

Jesus and *Mahomet*, they Reckon amongst the Four Great Prophets) and by what *Kessens*, (the fam'd Mahometan Writer of the Lives of the Fathers) relates concerning him, *That when David sang the Praises of God, the Hills, and Birds, and Beasts therein accompany'd him*. Which gross Literal interpretation of Figurative Expressions in the *Psalms*, and of his pathetic invitations to the inanimate Creatures to joyn with him in celebrating their common Creator, he seems to have borrow'd from the Alcoran it self; where *Mahomet* brings God in saying, 'We reduc'd the Mountains to comply with him, who should joyn with him in Praises Morning and Evening; the Birds also flock to him; all these are obsequious to him. And though the New Testament be not written in Hebrew, yet its Writers being Hebrews, have chiefly conform'd themselves to the Style of the Translators of the Old Testament, (which whether or no it constitute what Criticks of late so dispute of under the Name of *Lingua*, or *Dialectus Hellenistica*, I pretend not to define) and that of the Apocry-

Kessens,
pag 99.
See *Psal.*
114.4.
Psal. 15

Surat 37.
Vide H.
Hotting p.
62, and
63.

phal Authors and other Jews Writing in the same Language; who (except perhaps *Jofephus* and *Philo*) wrote rather, If I may so speak, an Hebrew than an Attick Greek; or at least, in a Dialect, which (by reason of their frequent References to the Septuagints Version,) abounds, if not with *Hebraisms*, with expressions Obvious in Hebrew Writings, and Unfrequent in Greek ones, and so relishes much of the *Hebraick* Style; Of which, as well in the New as the Old Testament, those we reason with, being strangers to that Primitive Tongue, must be incompetent Judges; there being in the Idiorisms of all Languages, peculiar Graces, which (like those most subtil Spirits, which Exhale in pourcing Essences out of one Vessel into another) are lost in most (especially if Literal) Translations; and the Holy Tongue being that which God himself made choice of, to Dignifie with his Expressions, having divers whose Penetrancy is as little transfusible into any other, as the Sun's dazeling Brightness, or the Water of a Diamond can be undetractingly Painted; and having divers Words and Phrases, whose Pithy-

ness

ness and Copiousness, none in Deriv'd (or other) Languages can match. Some of the Hebrew Conjugations, as chiefly those call'd *Hiphil* and *Hitpaël*, give significations to Verbs, which the Want of answerable Conjugations in Western Languages, makes us unable to fill or Equal without Paraphrases, which are very rarely so comprehensive as the Original Words; and (to hint this upon the by) the Ignorance, or not Considering of this one Grammatical Truth, hath kept Men from fully Understanding, divers Passages of the New Testament, wherein the Greek Tongues want of those Conjugations, hath made Active or Intransitive Verbs, be us'd in a Transitive or Reciprocal signification. How impertinently Men's Ignorance of its Originals, may make them censure the Scripture, I had once occasion to take notice of, by finding a famous Commentator, note Saint *Paul* of impropriety of Speech; in the beginning of that, which is commonly thought to be his First Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, but by the Learned *Grotius* (in his Paradoxes, *De Antichristo*,) not improbably esteemed to be his Se-

2 *Thef.*
1. 8.

cond: for whereas instead of the Greek Words *ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑξήχρηται ὁ λόγος* τὸ *κρυπτός*, which ours have rightly Englished, *from You sounded out the Words*; he found in his Translation, *A vobis diffamatus est sermo*; not knowing Paul to have Written in Greek, he would needs correct him for having Written *Diffamatus est*, instead of *Divulgatus est*.

The Third
Answer.

Thirdly, We may yet further consider, That as to many Passages of Scripture accus'd of not appearing Eloquent to *European* Judges, it might be justly represented, That the Eastern Eloquence differs widely from the Western. In those purer Climates, where Learning, that is here but a Denizon, was a Native; the most cherish'd and admir'd Compositions of their Wits, if judg'd by Western Rules of Oratory, will be judg'd Destitute of it. Their Dark and Involv'd Sentences, their Figurative and Parabolical Discourses; their Abrupt and Maim'd way of expressing themselves, which often leaves much place to GuesSES at the Sense; and their neglect of connecting Transitions, which often leaves us at a loss for the Method

thod and Coherency of what they Write; are Qualities, that our Rhetoricians do not more generally Dislike, than theirs Practice: their being, perhaps little less Disparity in our Opinions than in our Wayes of Writing; for their Pens, (as if it were a Prefage of the different Changes the Jews and Greeks have made in point of Religion) move from the Right hand towards the Left; our's (therein imitated by those of the *Ethiopians*) from the Left towards the Right; so that we think they write Backwards, and they, that we do so. Of this difference of the Notions, that the Eastern and Western Colonies of the Sons of *Adam* have harbour'd concerning Eloquence, I shall need to Mention but one instance, that One is so remarkable: and that's the Alkoran. How much the *Mahometan* World boasts the Eloquence of that Book, can scarce be unknown to those that have, (though but a little) buff'd their Curiosity in that sort of Enquiries. The Ablest Arabian Expositors, and other Authors, tell us, that all the Wit and Art of Men and Dæmons, would be unable to hinder that Book from being

Feidavi,
Ahmedibn,
Edris, and
others.

S.
Surat. x.
S. 11. and
S. 17.

being Matchless; *Mahomet* himself was so proud of it, that in some passages in it, he defy's its Opposers to equal one Surat or Section of it, and seems to make its Peerlesness an Argument of it's not being of barely Human Authority: and the *Saracens* press'd with their Religions being de-

--- *Esi nihil præter solum Alkoranum (adduxisset,) satis hoc foret ad eximiam excellentiam supra reliqua, quæ Prophetæ adduxerunt: nam ille Miraculum est, quod in secula durat præ omnibus aliis Miraculis. H. Hotting. Hist. Orient. pagina circiter 300.*

stitute of attesting Miracles, will not scruple to reply, That though there were no other Miracle to manifest the Excellency of their Religion above that taught by the Prophets, yet the Alco-

ran it Self were sufficient, as being a Lasting Miracle that transcends all other Miracles. How Charming its Eloquence may be in its Original, I confess my self too unskillfull in the Arabick Tongue, to be a competent Judge; my other Studies and Distractions having made me forget most of the little Knowledg, I had once acquir'd of that flourishing Language. But though the *Alkoran* have stolen too much from the Bible, not to contain

tain divers Excellent Things; (which is one Inducement to me to cite it the oftner) yet certainly, not only the Antient Latin Version of it, made by orders of the Abbot *Petrus Cluniacensis*, and publish'd in the Last Age, by the Procurement of *Bibliander*, (and of which this is the Grand Critick *Scaliger's* Exclamation, *Deum immortalem, quam inepta est Vulgaris illa, quam habemus, Interpretatio?*) would scarce by our European Orators be thought so much as of kinn to Eloquent; but the Recent Translations I have seen of it in French, and (as to divers of it, in) Latin, elaborated by great Scholars, and accurate Arabicians, by making it very Conformable to its Eastern Original, have not so rendred it, but that Persons that judge of Rhetorick by the Rules of it current in these Western Parts of the World, would instead of extolling it for the Superlative, not allow it the Positive Degree of Eloquence; would think the Style as destitute of Graces, as the Theology of Truth; and would possibly as much Admire the *Saracens* Admiration, as they do the Book. And not only what I have seen of the Eminent

J. Scaliger
Epist. 362.
apud Theod.
Hackspan
in libro cui
Titulus,
Fides &
Leges Mo-
hamædis.
pag. 2.

Eminent East-Indians, is strangely incongruous to our Notions of Eloquence; but what I have perus'd of the Famous *Literati* (as they call the Learned Men) of *China*, though written with Great Care by the Authors, and (as it seems) Translated with no Less by the Knowing Interpreters, would, to an ordinary *European* Orator, appear rather Ridiculous than Eloquent. But to content our selves with the Examples we formerly selected out of the less Remote Parts of the East; Since *Mahomet*, whose Eloquence (almost as Prosperous as his Sword) was able to bring Credit and Profelytes even to such a Religion as His: since *Moses*, that so Celebrated Legislator, bred up in the Refining Court, and all the fam'd Wisdom of the Egyptians: since *Solomon*, who had such Incommunicable Advantages to improve himself, and whose Wisdom (esteem'd capable to have Govern'd more Kingdoms than his had Subjects) the Western World hath for so many Ages Admir'd, and the Eastern, only not Idoliz'd: and since the Prophet *Daniel*, whose Promising Youth was not only Cultivated by the

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Instructions of the Chaldean Sages, but Enjoy'd the Diviner Tutorage of Gods Spirit; and whose Matchless Abilities prefer'd him from a Captive, to be the Chief as well of the Caldean Wife-men, as the Median Princes: since these Applauded Writers, I say, whom the Eastern Nations so Much and so Justly admir'd, by many of our Latinists are not thought Good Writers, because of our Differing Notions of Eloquence; nay, if amongst *Europeans* themselves, *Cicero* hath found Many Censurers, and a Book hath been published to prove that *Tully* was not Eloquent; may not we Rationally enough suppose, that the Grecian and Roman Style amongst the Eastern Writers, may not be much better relish'd than their's is amongst us; and that consequently, in those parts of the Scripture whose Eloquence is not Obvious to us *Europeans*, the Pretended Want of Eloquence may be but a Differing and Eastern kind of it? Specially, if we consider, that the Antientest Writers in Prose now extant amongst us, were scarce contemporary to the latest Writers of the Old Testament; and yet that Eloquence, the

Dress

Dress of our Thoughts, like the Dress of our Bodies, differs not only in several Regions, but in several Ages. And oftentimes in That, as in Attire, what was Lately Fashionable, is Now Ridiculous, and what Now makes a Man look like a Courtier, may within these Few Lustres make him look like an Antick: though how purely 'tis the Mode that makes such things appear Handsome or Deform'd, may be readily collected from the Vicissitudes observable in Modes; Men by intervalls relapsing into Obsolete Fashions. That there are Great Changes in that Mode of Writing men commonly mistake for Eloquence, I shall produce no less Illustrious a Witness than *Seneca*, who in his hundred and fourteenth Epistle, (to omit other Passages in his VVorks) not only proves it at large, but shows that in some Ages, even the Faulty wayes of Expression, conspir'd in by the VVits of those Times, have pass'd for Eloquence. The Scripture Style then, though it were not Eloquent Now, may have excellently suited the Genius of Those Times its Several Books were written in; and have been very proper for those People it was

Primarily

Primarily design'd to Work upon. And if I would presume to be Paradoxical in a thing I so little-pretend Skill in as Eloquence, I might further represent on this occasion, That Rhetorick being but an Organical or Instrumental Art, in order Chiefly to Perswasion, or Delight, its Rules ought to be estimated by their Tendency, and Commensurateness to its End; and consequently, are to be conform'd to by a Wiseman, but so far forth as he judgeth them Seasonable and Proper to Please or to Perswade: which when he sees he can do better by Declining them, than by Practising them, (as Orators, like Hunters, must oftentimes leave the most Beaten Paths, if they will not lose their Game) he should not scruple to prefer the End to the Means; the Scope of the Artist, to what the Schools are pleas'd to call the Scope of the Art; and to think it more Eligible to speak Powerfully, than to speak Regularly. And we may hence consider, that it may be somewhat Inconsiderate to judge of all Eloquence, by the Rules of it that *Cicero's* Admirers impose on us; and Confound their Systems of Precepts with the Art of Rhetorick,

A short
Digression
concerning
the Art of
Rhetorick.

Rhetorick, as if they were Equivalent, or of the same extent. For *Cicero* being reputed (and that Deservedly) an Eloquent man, and very successful in Perswading his thus and thus qualify'd Hearers; divers, whose Modesty or Despair kept them from aspiring to more than Imitation, observing that *Tully* often made use of such and such a Contrivance, and such and such Figurative forms of speaking, took the pains to reduce those Observations into Rules, which being highly applauded by their Successors, and by them recruited with some Resembling Rules drawn from the Practice of a few other Orators, were afterwards compil'd into an Art, which as I deny not to be a great Help to the imitation of *Tully* and *Demosthenes*, or those others from whose Structure and Fashions of speech such Institutions have been drawn, so I shall no more take it for a Compleat System of Rhetorick, than any Instructions deducible from the Journals of *Solomons* Tarshish Fleets, and from the Grecian and Romans Sea-voyages, for the true and entire Art of Navigation. For if other Persons, either by an Endowment or

Improve-

Improvement of Nature, can find other Equally, or more Happy and Powerful or Moving (though never so differing) wayes of expressing themselves, they ought as little to be Confin'd by the Prescriptions acquiesc'd in before them, as *Columbus* thought himself Oblig'd to be by the Rules or Practice of Antient Navigators; whose Methods and Voyages, had he not boldly ventur'd to Vary from, and pass beyond, how Vast and Rich a Portion of the World had his Conformity left undiscover'd! And on this occasion, *Theophilus*, I must mention one thing that I have observ'd, which perhaps you will not think either Despicable or Impertinent: and it is, That though the People of *China* be esteem'd the most Numerous, the most Flourishing, and (very few, if any, excepted) the most Civiliz'd Nation in the World: though amongst them the greatest part of Preferments be attainable by Verbal Learning, and though they have Books in their Language (how Well written, I know not, having never Read any of them) of almost all kind of Liberal Arts and Sciences; yet I find by the late Traveller

O

veller in *China*, that Writ the Italian History of that Kingdome, and by other Authors that mention their Literature, that this Populous and Ingenious Nation, that has been so long settled in a Flourishing Condition, and more than any other People allows Encouragements and Recompences to Learned Men, has not car'd to receive Rhetorick into the Number of their Arts and Sciences, presuming, as one may guess, that the Confining men's Expressions to Establish'd Rules would not be so like to Enable those to express themselves Eloquenty, that Nature has Indispos'd to do so, as to Hinder others from expressing themselves, as well, as, were they left to their full liberty, they would do. I will not say, nevertheless, that our strict Ciceronian Rules, are Crutches that may be Helps to Weak or Lame Phantasies, but are Cloggs or Burdens to Sound and Active ones: but this I observe, that these Utopian Laws of Oratory, are seldome rigorously impos'd by any, that publish other Books that may be examined by them: and that Wise-men, as well in the West, as in the East, will not easily lose Good Thoughts,

Thoughts, or Good Expressions, because they are not Reducible to Them. And this I the rather press, because I have found but too many so blindly Servile, as to Imitate without Discretion or Reserve in applauded Authors, as well the Bad as the Good; create such Artists Errors, Rules of Art; and make one man's Particular Phantasies, or perhaps Failings, Confining Laws to others, and convey them as such to their Succeeders, who are afterwards bold to mis-name all Unobsequiousness to their Incogitancy, Presumption; as *Seneca* tells us of divers Imperfections of style, which being familiar to some One, who at that time hath the Vogue for Eloquence, are upon his Score, copy'd by his Imitators, and by them Taught to others: As, (sayes he) when *Sallust* flourished, his Style made Maimed and Abrupt Sentences, words Surprisingly Mis-plac'd, and an Obscure Brevity pass for Ornaments: and indeed, 'tis not uneasie for any man to

O 2 observe,

— Hæc vitia unus aliquis inducit, sub quo tunc eloquentia est: cæteri imitantur, & alter alteri tradunt. Sic *Sallustius* vigente, amputata sententia, & verba ante expectatum eadem, & obscura Brevitas, fuerunt pro cultu, *Seneca* Epist. 114.

observe, the very Weeds of Cry'd up Rhetoricians, cry'd up for Flowers of Rhetorick. But having already wandred, perhaps, too farr in this Digression, I shall now conclude it; though, since, tis for the Scripture, and with its Enemies that I am contending, I shall venture to do it, with minding our Cardinal, and those that so Undervalue the Scripture's wayes of Expression, in Comparison of *Tully's*, because his Books do so Regularly Express the Rules of Eloquence; that 'tis no Marvel they should find *Cicero's* Writings to be so Conformable to their Lawes of Art, whilst they frame those Laws of Art out of his Writings.

But, *Theophilus*, I fear I have detain'd You too long in a Digression whereinto I slipt but Occasionally, which is not so Necessary to my present Argument, but that I am content You should look upon the Paradox as any thing rather than an Opinion or Reasoning whereon I lay any Great stress.

In the fourth Place then let me represent to You, That there are very Few, if any Books in the World, that are

The
fourth Answer to
the eighth
Objection.

are no more Voluminous, in which there is greater Plenty of Figurative Expressions, than in the Bible. Though this may seem Strange, 'tis no more than may be made Good by more than some Hundreds of Instances; there being few Tropes or Figures in Rhetorick, of which Numerous Examples are not collectible out of the Expressions of Holy Writ. I insist not upon this, because a bare Catalogue of the Rhetorical Passages I could enumerate, would too much swell an Essay; and I am inform'd, that Task hath been already prosperously undertaken by Abler Pens. Wherefore, I shall now only say, that the Eloquence of the Scripture hath been highly Celebrated by no small Number of Persons, highly celebrated for Eloquence; and that many, who thought themselves as Intelligent in Oratory, as those that Censure the Scripture, have suspected their own Eloquence of Insufficiency, worthily to Extol that of the Prophet *Esay*; and some of them, (amongst whom I cannot but Name that Excellent Prince of *Mirandula*, whom even the greatest Rabbi of this Age, styles the Phoenix

*Menasse
ben Israel.*

of His Age) who after having Unsatisfiedly Travell'd thorough all sorts of Human Volumes, have Rested and acquiesc'd only in these Divine Ones: which will not a little Recommend the Scripture, since we may apply to Books, what an Excellent Poet sayes of Mistresses,

*'Tis not that which First we love,
But what Dying we approve,*

Mr. Waller

That we Express the highest value of. And indeed, the best Artists making Two Parts of Oratory; The One which consists in the Embellishments of our Conceptions, and the Other that consists in the Congruity of them to our Design and Method, and the suitable Accommodation of them to the various Circumstances considerable in the Matter, the Speaker, and the Hearers; this Latter is peculiarly and Inimitably practis'd in the Scripture; and as much of the Former (which is not onely less considerable, but is changeable and unagreed of, as we have Newly seen) is made use of, as is requisite to the Author's purposes, and to manifest that Delicacy or Smooth-

Smoothness, never ceases to be the Property of his Style, but because in some Cases it would be Incongruous to his Design. And where these Verbal Ornaments are Spar'd, they are not Miss'd; for as there are some Bodies so Well shap'd and fashion'd, that any Cloaths become them much better than the most fine and gracefull would do Ordinary (much more Crooked or Mishapen.) Persons: so there are Writings, whose Matter and Structure are such, that the Plainest Language can scarce Mis-become them so, as to hinder them from Eclipsing a Trifling or Ill-match'd Subject, with the Sprucest and Gaudiest Expressions that can belavish'd on it. But the Truth is, that this Florid Eloquence is Great in many Texts, where 'tis not at all Conspicuous, being Hidden in the Matter; (as in Roses of Diamonds, the Jewels oftentimes keep us from minding the Flower and the Enamel) and appears not Great, but because 'tis not the Greatest. Some famous Writers have Challeng'd *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, to compare with the Prophet *Esay*; in whom they have not only Admir'd that Lofty Strain which Artists

have term'd the Sublime Character, but even that Harmonious Disposition and Sound of Words, (I mean in their Original) which the French prettily call, *La cadence des Períodes*.

Wherefore, *Theophilus*, whereas I have formerly acknowledg'd, that there are some Witty Men that speak very Disrespectfully of the Scripture, I hope that if You meet with any such, You will consider, That it has among the Wits, as well Celebrators, and Admirers, as Disregarders. And that You may think this Desire of mine the more Reasonable, be pleas'd to consider with me, That there are divers things which ought to Lessen the Authority of the Disparagers of the Scripture, in the case under Consideration.

For first, how Few of them think You, are wont to Read it in its Originals, and how much Less a Number is there of those who both Know and duly consider all those Particulars represented in the past Discourse on the behalf of the Scripture's Style: So that in a Great many Men of Parts, their Undervaluation of the Scripture proceeds not from their having Great Wits,

Wits, but from their not having a Competent Information of what can be alledg'd for its Justification.

But though we should suppose those we speak of not to want Information, yet we may well suppose many of them not to be free from Vanity and Envy, there scarce being any fault so incident to great Wits, as the Ambition of being thought still more and more so, and the Unwillingness that any Composures but their Own, or those they have a Hand in, should be Celebrated: as if all Praises were Injurious to them, that are given to any other. It need be no great wonder then if so excellent a Book as the Scripture, have as well Enviars, as Admirers: And if there be divers who Cavil at it, and seem to Undervalue it, out of a Criminal fondness of the over-ambition'd Title of a *Wit*, which they hope to acquire by Unherding and Keeping out of the Road, and Owning their being able to Slight and Disgrace that, which so many others Reverence and Venerate;

But thirdly, It is sufficiently Notorious, that of the Opposers of the Scripture, there is, a great part whose Vanity

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Vanity and Envy, though no small Faults, are not their greatest Crimes; but who live so Dissolutely and Scandalously, that the Suspicion cannot but be obvious, that such decry the Scripture for fear of being Oblig'd (at least, for meer shame) to live more conformably to it. And that 'twere no slander to affirm it to be their Interest, not their Reason, that makes them find fault with a Book that finds so much fault with them; And they who are sensible of the Truth of that of our Saviour, where he says, *That many love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil: and that He that doth Evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd*, will not be much mov'd to find Conscious Malefactors find fault with the Statute-Book, but will rather look upon these Sinners Censures of the Scripture, as Apologies they judge necessary to Palliate their Sins, or as Acts of Revenge, for their being expos'd in all their Deformity to the Eyes of the World, and of their own Consciences, in the Bible: and (consequently) will be inclin'd to Think, that their Irreligious Expressions do rather

John 3.
19, 20.

rather shew what they would have Men Believe of Them, than what they Believe of the Scripture, by seeming to Slight which, they hope to have their Vices imputed rather to a Superiority of their Reason over that of others, than a Servitude of their Reason to their Passions.

"Here I thought to pass on to another Argument, But (to Express my self in *David's* Words) *While I was Musing, the fire burn'd*, and my Zeal for the Scripture, together with the Charity it has taught me to Exercise ev'n towards its Opposers, suffers me not, with either Silence or Lanquid Resentments, to see how much that Incomparable Book loses of the Opinion of Less discerning Men, upon the Account of their Dis-respects, who are (whether Deservedly or not,) look'd upon as Wits. And therefore to what I have Represented to Invalidate the Authority of those Few Persons, otherwise Truly Witty, that Undervalue the Scripture, I am oblig'd to add, that besides Them, there is a Number of those that slight the Scripture, who are but Look'd upon as Wits, without

A long Digression against Profaneness, as it relates to the Scripture. Psal. 39. 3.

'without being such Indeed: Nay,
 'who many of them would not be so
 'much as Mistaken for such, but for
 'the Boldness they take to Own
 'Slighting of the Scripture, and to A-
 'buse the Words of it, to Irreligious
 'Senses, and perhaps passing to the
 'Impudence of Perverting Inspir'd
 'Expressions, to deliver Obscene
 'Thoughts. But to Knowing and Se-
 'rious Men, this Prævaricating with
 'the Scripture will neither Discredit
 'It, nor much Recommend the Pro-
 'phane Prævaricator; For a Books
 'being Capable of being so Mis-us'd,
 'is too Unavoidable to be a Dispa-
 'ragement to it. Nor will any Intel-
 'ligent Reader Undervalue the char-
 'ming Poems of *Virgil* or of *Ovid*,
 'because by Shuffling and Disguising
 'the Expressions, some French Wri-
 'ters have of Late been pleas'd out
 'of Rare Pieces to Compose whole
 'Books of what they call, *Vers Bur-
 'lesques*, Design'd by their Ridicu-
 'lousness to make their Readers Sport;
 'And on the Other side, to Abuse
 'Dismember'd Words and Passages
 'of any Author to Meanings hene're
 'Dream'd of, is a Thing so Easie, that
 'almost

'almost any Man may have the Wit
 'to Talk at that Prophane Rate, that
 'will but allow himself the Sawci-
 'ness to do so. And indeed Experi-
 'ence shows, that if this Vice it self
 'do not make its Practisers suspected
 'of the being Necessitous of the Qua-
 'lity they put it on to be thought Ma-
 'sters of, yet at least Persons Intelli-
 'gent, and Pious, will not be apt to
 'Value any Discourse as truly Wit-
 'ty, that cannot Please the Fancy with-
 'out Offending the Conscience, and
 'will never Admire his Plenty that
 'cannot make an Entertainment, with-
 'out Furnishing out the Table with
 'Unclean Meats: and Considering Per-
 'sons will scarce think it a Demonstra-
 'tion of a Mans being a Wit, that
 'he will Venture to be Damn'd to
 'be Thought one. And that which
 'Aggravates these Men's Prophane-
 'ness, and leaves them Excuseless
 'in it, is, that there are Few of these
 'Fools, (for so the Wise-man calls
 'them that *Make a Mock of Sinn:*) Psal. 14. 1.
 'that *have said in their Hearts that*
 '*there is no God;* or that the Scripture
 'is not his Word. Their Dis-respect
 'to the Scripture springing from their
 'Vanity

' Vanity, not their Incredulity. They af-
 ' fect Singularity, for want of any thing
 ' else than is Singular: and finding in
 ' themselves Strong Desires of Con-
 ' spicuousness, with small Abilities to
 ' Attain it, they are Resolv'd with
 ' *Erostratus*, that Fir'd *Diana's* Temple
 ' to be Talk'd of for having done so,
 ' to Acquire that Considerableness by
 ' their Sacrilege, which they must De-
 ' spair of from their Parts. And in-
 ' deed there want not many who have
 ' so Little Wit, as to Cry up all this
 ' sort of People for Great Wits. And
 ' as Withees, whilst they are sound
 ' grow Unregarded Trees; but when
 ' they once are Rotten, Shine in the
 ' Night: so many of these Pretenders,
 ' whilst they were not very Prophane,
 ' were (and that justly) esteemed
 ' very Dull; but now that their Parts
 ' are absolutely Corrupted and Per-
 ' verted, they grow Conspicuous, only
 ' because they are grown Deprav'd.
 ' And I shall make bold to continue
 ' the Comparison a little further, and
 ' Observe, that as this Rotten Wood
 ' Shines but in the Night; so many of
 ' these Pretenders pass for Wits but
 ' amongst them that are not Truly so.

For

' For Persons Really Knowing, can
 ' easily Distinguish betwixt that which
 ' Exacts the Title of Wit from our
 ' Judgments, and that which but Ap-
 ' pears such to our Corruptions. And
 ' how often the Discourse we Cen-
 ' sure is of the Latter sort, they need
 ' not be Inform'd that have Observ'd,
 ' how Many will Talk very Accepta-
 ' bly in Derogation of Religion, whom
 ' upon other Subjects, their Partiallest
 ' Friends acknowledge very Dull; and
 ' who are taken Notice of for Persons
 ' that seldom say any thing Well,
 ' but what 'tis Ill to say. And Que-
 ' stionless there is no Small Number
 ' of these Scorners, whose Censures
 ' of the Scriptures Style are little less
 ' Guilty of Presumption than Pro-
 ' faneness. I have of late Years met
 ' with Divers such Vain Pretenders,
 ' who blush not to Talk of Rhetorick
 ' more Magisterially than *Aristotle* or
 ' *Tully* would; and superciliously to
 ' Deride, in Comparison of their
 ' own Writings and their's who
 ' Write like them, not the Bible only,
 ' but the Most Venerated Authors of
 ' Antiquity; and, to use *Asaph's*
 ' Words; *They speak Loftily, they set*

 Psal. 73.
 8, 9.

' their

' their Mouth against the Heavens, and
 ' their Tongue walketh thorow the Earth;
 ' they speak Arrogantly and Cenfori-
 ' ously both of God and Men; whilst
 ' themselves oftentimes Understand no
 ' Tongue but their Mother's; and are
 ' Strangers enough to Rhetorick, not
 ' to know the Difference betwixt a
 ' Trope and a Figure, betwixt a Pro-
 ' sopopoea and a Metaphore, or be-
 ' twixt a Climax and a Metonymy.
 ' Nor is our Wonder like to cease, to
 ' find these Transcendent Wits, (as
 ' they are pleas'd to think themselves,)
 ' so Undervalue the Scripture, by Con-
 ' sidering the Rare Composures they
 ' Despise it for: these being Common-
 ' ly no other than some Drunken Song
 ' or Paltry Epigram, some Fawning
 ' Love-letter, or some such other flashy
 ' Trifle, that doth much more argue a
 ' Depress'd Soul, than an Elevated
 ' Fancy. Some of these Gallants by
 ' their Tavern-Songs, use the Muses
 ' like Anchovees, only to Entice Men
 ' to Drink: Another with more So-
 ' lemnity and Applause, makes the
 ' Muses (what the French call) the
 ' Confidants of his Amours, Pro-
 ' stitutes his Wit to Evince and Cele-
 brate

' brate the Defeat of his Reason, and
 ' never considering how apt Self-Love
 ' makes us to Magnifie any thing that
 ' Magnifies us, is Proud to have Wit
 ' ascrib'd him by as Brib'd as Incom-
 ' petent Judges of it, and takes it for
 ' as High a Proof as Desirable a Fruit
 ' of Eloquence, to Perswade a Vain
 ' Mistress that She is Handsome and
 ' Ador'd, to whom t'were Eloquence
 ' indeed to be able to perswade the
 ' Contrary. Divers of the Jews are
 ' wont to Mention the Names of De-
 ' ceased Sinners, with that Brand ta-
 ' ken out of the *Proverbs*, *May the*
 ' *Name of the Wicked Rot*; but as the
 ' filthiest Swine after their Death are
 ' Salted, and the Gammons made of
 ' their Flesh, are serv'd in, all Stuck
 ' with Bays; so Divers that have
 ' Liv'd Notorious Epicures, have too
 ' often after their Death, not only their
 ' Names Salted (not to say Embalm'd)
 ' with flattering Epitaphs, and (I
 ' wish, seldomer, as flattering) Funeral
 ' Sermons; but have their Drunken
 ' or Lustfull Rimes Extoll'd with such
 ' Elogies by their surviving Resem-
 ' blers, that not only Good Christians
 ' but Good Poets cannot but Grieve

'and Blush, thus to see Bayes, that
 'should be Appropriated to, and
 'Crown that Heav'nly Gift call'd
 'Poetry, When Mindfull of its Dig-
 'nity and Extraction, it Endears to us
 'by our Fancies, Truths that should
 'have an Influence on our Affections,
 '(by cloathing Excellent Thoughts in
 'Suitable and Winning Dresses) Pro-
 'stituted and Degraded to make
 'Wreaths for those, who have no
 'better Title to them, than a few Sen-
 'sual Rimes, where the Dictates of
 'Horace are as little Conform'd to, as
 'the Example of David; and the
 'Laws of the Art, little less Violated
 'than those of Religion. 'Tis pleasant
 'to Observe in how many of such
 'Copies of Verses, the Themes ap-
 'pear to have been made to the Con-
 'ceits, not the Conceits for the
 'Themes, how often the Words are
 'not so Properly the Cloaths of the
 'Matter, as the Matter the Stuffing of
 'the Words; how frequently Sub-
 'lime Non-sense passes for Sublime
 'Wit; and (though, according to
 'my Notion of it, that is indeed True
 'Wit, which 'tis more easie to Un-
 'derstand, than 'tis not to Admire it,)
 'how

'how commonly Confus'd Notions,
 'and Abortive or Unlick'd Con-
 'ceptions are in Exotick Language, or
 'Ambiguous Expressions, expos'd to
 'the Uncertain Adoption of the Cour-
 'teous Reader; which the Writers are
 'emboldned to expect Favourable, by
 'finding Men once Thought (whether
 'deservedly or otherwise) Lofty
 'Wits, to have so often the luck of
 'Parrots, and of those that Talk in
 'their sleep, who are not seldome Un-
 'derstood by others, when they do
 'not Understand themselves. And ve-
 'ry much of Kin to their Verses is
 'their Prose. For though I am far
 'from denying that those that have
 'store of Wit, may express Some of
 'it in an Address to a Great Man, or
 'in Writing to a Mistress; yet as
 'for such Prophane Persons I am now
 'speaking of, who rather would be
 'Thought Wits, than are so, 'tis easie
 'to discern, that very many of their
 'almost as much Flatter'd as Flatter-
 'ing Letters of Love and Complement,
 'are but Prologues to, and Paraphra-
 'ses of the Subscription (Your humble
 'Servant.) Though Love be Univer-
 'sally thought to make the Phanisie

'soar, (Lovers like ceel'd Pidgeons
 'flying the Higher for having been
 'Blinded) and though even the Wiser
 'observe, that, like War which is wont
 'as well to Raise Soldiers of Fortune
 'as to Ruine Men of Fortune, Love
 'warms and elevates Lesser Wits,
 'though it too often Infatuate the
 'Great ones : Yet a Witty Lady did
 'not scruple to say frequently, that
 'Give her but leave to barr half a
 'score Words, such as she pleas'd to
 'name, and she would undertake
 'to Spoyl all the fine Letters of our
 'Amorous Gallants. I applaud not
 'the Severity of this Lady; and think
 'her Challenge rellishes as much of
 'Vanity as Skill; but yet, to express
 'the sense of these few Words, [I
 'desire You should think I can Write
 'well, am a Civil Person, and Your
 'humble Servant,] being the Drift
 'and Substance of most of these Cere-
 'monial Papers; these (oftentimes as
 'Tedious as Servile) Amplificators,
 'with all their Empty Multiplicity of
 'Finewords, do but, like Market-peo-
 'ple, pay a Piece in Twenty Shillings.
 'In Wits not blest'd with solid Rea-
 'son and Learning, (that is, in most
 'Rea-

'Readers) Phantasie being the Predo-
 'minant Faculty, makes them relish
 'those Writings Most where Fantasy un-
 'rivall'd reigns. And therefore, though
 'I dare not say that it requires no
 'Great Parts for those to Write high
 'and Acceptable Complements, that
 'think nothing fit to be endeavour'd in
 'Complements, but to make them
 'Acceptable by making them High e-
 'nough; (Flattery and Prophane-
 'ness seeming in such Composures
 'what Spots are in Leopards, Ble-
 'mishes that made a Great part of
 'their Beauty) or for a Flatterer to
 'perswade those Vain Persons that
 'will readily Believe a man, even
 'when he doth not Believe himself:
 'yet sure it gives much Latitude
 'and Liberty to a Writer, not to be
 'Oblig'd to Believe what he Sayes, nor
 'Say but what he thinks either Will be
 'or Ought to be believed. And truly,
 'they that exercise their Pens on ei-
 'ther sort of Themes (I mean those that
 'require only New or Pleasing Phan-
 'sies and Smooth Language; and those
 'that require Learning and Know-
 'ledge pertinently and handsomely ex-
 'prest) do, I doubt, not find it much

'less difficult for Writers to Delight,
 'where they propose themselves no
 'Higher end, and scruple at nothing
 'they judge Conducive to that Inferior
 'one; than to Please, where to Do so
 'is but a Subordinate End, which men
 'allow not themselves neither the use
 'of all proper means to attain; nor do
 'I question but such Persons find it
 'far more Easie to write Acceptably
 'on Subjects, where they are not ty'd to
 'speak either Reason or Truth; than to
 'write Well on a Theme where men
 'are Confin'd to write nothing but
 'what they judge Usefull and what
 'they can make Good; as conside-
 'ring that they may be call'd to Ac-
 'count by Men for what they pub-
 'lish; if not by God, both for their
 'own Time and that of their Rea-
 'ders. And indeed when I compare the
 'most Applauded Trifles of these Un-
 'dervaluers of the Scripture Style, with
 'the Celebrating Discourses of it ex-
 'tant in the Learned Writings of
 'St. *Austin*, St. *Hierom*, *Tertullian* La-
 'tiantius, *Chrysostom*, *Mirandula* and o-
 'thers, whose penetrant and powerfull
 'Arguments defeat not God's Ene-
 'mies, as *Samson* did the Philistines
 'with

'with a Jaw-bone of an Ass, nor as
 'Shamgar with an Ox-goad, (I mean Judg. 3. 31
 'with blunt and despicable Weapons)
 'but as *Elias* did with fire from Hea- 2 King. 1.
 'ven: and whose Apologetical Defen- 10.
 'ces of the spiritual *Jerusalem* are glit-
 'tering and solid, as the Wall of the
 'Heavenly *Hierusalem* is describ'd to
 'be of *Jasper*, and the Foundations of
 'the Wall garnished with all manner Rev. 21.
 'of Pretious stones: when I compare, V. 10, 18,
 'I say, the Composures of our Frothy 19.
 'Censurers with those of the Sacred
 'Orators; me thinks I discern such
 'a Difference betwixt them, as I have
 'observ'd betwixt those justly admir'd
 'Statutes I have seen in the Capitol,
 'and the Larger sort of Babys that we
 'find in the Exchange: for the Former,
 'besides their Vastness, are so recom-
 'mended by the Worth and Perma-
 'nency of their Matter, the Excel-
 'lency of the Workmanship, and the
 'Nobleness of what they represent,
 'that they are most priz'd by the Best
 'Artists, and Time is not only unable
 'to Consume them, but still Encrea-
 'ses Men's value of them; whereas the
 'Latter are little Trifles scarce welcom
 'to

'to any But Children in Understand-
 'ing, and Admir'd only for a Gawdy
 'Effeminate Dress, which will quick-
 'ly either be Sully'd or Worn out; and a
 'Fashionableness which within a short
 'while will perhaps be Ridiculous.
 'But supposing at length, that the Pro-
 'phane Aspirer should be so lucky, or
 'so Successfull, (for Happy I cannot
 'think it) as to attain the so Criminally
 'courted Notedness, yet will he have
 'no great cause to Boast the Purchase,
 'when he seriously considers, That
 'the Devil, who seduces Other sinners
 'like Men, with Current Coyn or
 'sparkling Jewels : (something that
 'either Advantages their Interests, or
 'Delights their Senses;) hath envea-
 'gled him like a Child, with a Whi-
 'stle; a Trifle that only pleases with
 'a transient and empty sound; and,
 'That Fame is a Blessing only in Re-
 'lation to the Qualities, and the Per-
 'sons that give it : since otherwise the
 'Tormented Prince of Devils himself
 'were as Happy as he is Miserable; and
 'Famouness unattended with Endear-
 'ing Causes, is a Quality so Undesira-
 'ble, that even Infamy and Folly can
 'confer it. As *Momus* is little less
 'talk'd

'talk'd of than *Homer* ; the Unjust *Pi-*
 'lat is more Famous than *Aristides*
 'the Just ; and *Barabbas* his Name is
 'signally recorded in Scripture, where-
 'as the Penitent Thief is left unmen-
 'tion'd. And sure the highest Favors
 'that Applause can impart, and the Be-
 'ing (though never so loudly) cry'd
 'up for a Wit, will hardly so repair
 'the Punishment of Prophaneness, but
 'that it's wretched Sufferer will find
 'but Small Satisfaction in having his
 'Name Celebrated in other Books ,
 'whilst it is Blotted out of that of
 'Life. And as for those (you know
 'who I mean) that aspiring to Post-
 'hume Glory, endeavour to acquire
 'it by Irreligious Writings, destina-
 'ted not to see the Light till their Au-
 'thors be gone to the Region of Dark-
 'ness; I cannot but admire to see an
 'Ambition that projects beyond the
 'Grave, step short of Heaven: and
 'cannot but think those VVits the
 'Greatest Fools, who to tempt Praises
 'they shall never Hear, provide them-
 'selves Torments that they shall ever
 'feel. For though Prophaneness by those
 'that are guilty of it be too often
 'thought but a Small sin, because they
 'look

'look upon it but as a Verbal one, yet
 'I could easily represent it under ano-
 'ther Notion, if I would here Re-
 'peat what I have Discours'd touch-
 'ing Indulgence to Reputedly Small
 'and Verbal Sins in another Paper,
 'from which, though I will not now
 'transcribe any thing, yet I cannot
 'but wish it were well consider'd
 'how Affronting Speeches concerning
 'God's *Word* are like to be look'd up-
 'on in that Great Day, when (to bor-
 'row St. Jude's terms) *The Lord shall*
 '*come with ten thousands of his*
 '*Saints, to execute Judgment upon*
 '*all, and to convince all that are*
 '*Ungodly among them (not only) of*
 '*all their Ungodly Deeds which they*
 '*have Ungodly Committed; (but) al-*
 '*so of all their hard Speeches which*
 '*Ungodly Sinners have spoken against*
 '*him.* And indeed these presumed
 'Peccadillos, though oftentimes in
 'Health and Prosperity they appear
 'not to us to blemish much our Con-
 'sciences, yet when in our Distresses,
 'or at the Approaches of Death God
 'comes, as the Prophet speaks, to
 'search Men's Hearts as it were with
 'Candles, and punish the Men that
 'are

Jude vers.
 14, 15.

Zeph. 1. 12.

'are settled upon their Lees; (which
 'whilest a Liquor is, it may look
 'Clear, and be taken for Defeca-
 'ted, but a little Agitation of the
 'Vessel strait makes it Troubled and
 'Muddy) they appear in a Terrifying
 'form. For as Paper written upon
 'with Juyce of Lemons, may wear
 'White (the Livery of Innocence)
 'whilest 'tis kept from the Fire; but
 'being Held to it, Black Lines do pre-
 'sently appear: so out of many Con-
 'sciences that seem Clear in Prosperi-
 'ty, the Fire of Adversity draws out
 'the Latent Blacknesses, and makes us
 'read things Undiscern'd there before.
 'And Questionless, If, as the Scrip-
 'ture informs us, there are Sins whose
 'Cry is able to reach Heaven; so Loud
 'a Crime as the Prophaneness I am
 'now speaking of, is likely to do more
 'than Whisper there; especially since
 'it is much to be fear'd, that many of
 'these *Scoffers* (as they seem to be call'd
 'in the Scripture (2 Pet. 3. 3. and Jude
 'vers. 17, 18.) which they bear Witness
 'To, by Cavilling At it) do Rebel a-
 'gainst the Light, and Kick against the
 'pricks of their own Consciences; such
 'a crime, I say, will be so far from
 'Whispering in Heaven, that it will

Gen. 18. 27.

Rev. i. 15.

' rather give an Alarm that will rowze
 ' up provoked Justice; whose Infi-
 ' ons, like Stones tumbled down from
 ' the Towers of an Assaulted Place, the
 ' Longer they are in Falling on men,
 ' the more Fatally they Oppress them;
 ' in which regard perhaps, the Feet of
 ' our Saviour in the Apocalypse are de-
 ' scribed to be like unto Fine Brass, as
 ' if they burned, or glowed in a Fur-
 ' nace; to intimate, that though he be
 ' very Slow in his march to Destroy the
 ' Wicked, yet he is as Sure, when once
 ' he pleases to tread them under foot,
 ' to Crush and Consume them. If
 ' there be no Injury that more Exaspe-
 ' rates than Contempt, nor no Con-
 ' tempt that more Provokes than that
 ' which offends Directly and Imme-
 ' diately (the Affronters thereby pro-
 ' claiming that they are neither A-
 ' sham'd nor Afraid of Angering) how
 ' Provoking may we think that Crime
 ' which makes God the Subject of our
 ' Derision; and that with so Little Cir-
 ' cution, as to abuse that Word, which
 ' he so solemnly declar'd his Mind by
 ' to Mankind: *Plutarch*, to Manifest how
 ' much some Idolaters did more In-
 ' cense the Deity than some Atheists,
 ' tells us, he should esteem himself Less

'in.

' injur'd by the Man that should Doubt
 ' or Deny that there was ever any such
 ' Man as *Plutarch*; than by him that
 ' should Affirm that there was such a
 ' one indeed, but that he was an Old
 ' Fellow, that us'd, like the Poets
 ' *Saturn*, to Devour his Children; and
 ' was guilty of those other Crimes
 ' imputed by the Heathen to their
 ' Gods. Upon a like Account we may
 ' esteem God Less Provok'd by their
 ' Unbelief that doubt or reject the
 ' Scripture, than by their Prophane-
 ' ness that make so Sacrilegiously bold
 ' with it; since the Latter impute to
 ' God the Enditing of what they en-
 ' deavour to make men think fit to
 ' have Sport made with it. This of
 ' Prophaneness is so Empty and Un-
 ' profitable a Sin, that it scarce gets
 ' the Practiser any thing but an Ill
 ' Name amongst Good Men upon
 ' Earth, and a Worse Place amongst
 ' Bad Men in Hell; by making his En-
 ' mity to Piety so Malicious and so
 ' Disinterested, that he will endeavour
 ' to do Religion Harm, though it
 ' be to do Himself no good. He is
 ' such a Volunteer Sinner, that he hath
 ' neither the Wit nor the Excuse of
 ' declining his Conscience in Comple-
 ' ment

'ment to his Senses: and though he
 'ever makes but an Ill Bargain, that
 'gets in Hell too Boot, yet those I
 'would Reclaim, come far short of
 'the Comparative Wisdom of their
 'Folly, who to gain So Considerable
 '(though yet over-purchas'd) a Posses-
 'sion as the Whole World, should
 'part with their own Souls. And
 'sure a Sin that is Injurious to God's
 'Glory, and is apt to Subvert (what
 'He and Good Men Prize next,) the
 'dearly purchas'd, immortal, and in-
 'valuable Souls of Men; and to De-
 'stroy them for whom Christ Dyed;
 'will not by being Verbal be Prote-
 'cted from being Hainous: and to
 'those that Practise it, I shall recom-
 'mend the Latter half of the Epistle of
 'Jude; which though it seem Proper-
 'ly to relate to the Gnosticks, or Car-
 'pocrations of his Time, will deserve a
 'trembling Attention from those that
 'revive the sins there Condemned,
 'in Ours; and who would do well by
 'Seasonably considering the Fate there
 'threatned to their Predecessors, to
 'Tremble at their Crime. But for
 'Fear of Losing it, I shall not spend
 'more Time in endeavouring to Dis-
 'cuss our Scorners; whom I should

Rom. 14,
 15.

'have left to the Quiet Enjoyment
 'of their unenvi'd Self-admiration;
 'had not their Despizing the Scripture
 'upon a Presumption of their own
 'Matchless Wit, (like *Feroboam* that
 'forsook that Incomparable Structure,
 'the Temple, where God did so Glo-
 'riously and Peculiarly Manifest him-
 'self to Men; to Worship Calves of
 'his own making, 1 *King*: 12. 28, 32.)
 'Engag'd me, in Conformity to the
 'VWise-man's Counsel in such Cases,
 'to Answer the Fool according to his
 'Folly, lest he be Wise in his own Con-
 'ceit: for my Reproofs are address'd to
 'those call'd VWits, but as they are
 'Traducers or Undervaluers of the
 'Scripture; not as they either Pre-
 'tend to, or Enjoy, a Quality, which I
 'have the Justice to Esteem, though
 'not the Happiness to Possess: and
 'which my Value for It, and my Cha-
 'rity for Men, makes me Troubled to
 'see Arrogated by many that VWant
 'it; and by too many that Have it,
 'Prostituted to Gratifie other People's
 'Pride, or their own Lusts. How much
 'happier were it for Persons of Choice
 'Parts to employ them, as *Bezaleel* and
 '*Aholiab* did Theirs, in working for
 'the Sanctuary: in Asserting and Em-

Proverbs
 26. 5.

An Ap-
 pendix to
 the former
 Digressi-
 on, inviting
 one sort of
 Witty men
 to make a-
 mends for
 the Pro-
 phaneness
 of another.

‘bellishing Divinity? The Structure
 ‘will not alone deserve the Skilfullest
 ‘Hand; but though it reject not Goat’s
 ‘hair, and colour’d Badger’s skins, will
 ‘admit not onely Purple and Fine
 ‘Twined Linnen, but Gold, Silver, and
 ‘precious stones: the richest orna-
 ‘ments that Learning and Eloquence
 ‘can Grace Theology with, being not
 ‘onely Merited by that Heavenly sub-
 ‘ject, but being Applicable to it, as
 ‘much to their Own Advantage as to
 ‘that of their Theme. We see how
 ‘Ambitious men are to leave a Good
 ‘Name behind them, and appear in the
 ‘Habit of Virtue to their Own and
 ‘After times. Witness the Arti-
 ‘fices and Hypocrisie men generally
 ‘Veyl, or Disguize their Sins with; and
 ‘the Flattering Epitaphs, with which
 ‘so many Vitious Persons endeavour
 ‘to conveigh themselves to the Good
 ‘opinion of posterity. Now they that
 ‘write piously as well as handsomly,
 ‘have the advantage of getting them-
 ‘selves the Reputation as well of vir-
 ‘tuous as of able men, and besides
 ‘that Double Recompence may expect
 ‘a third, (Transcending both) in Hea-
 ‘ven, where they that (in the True
 ‘Scripture sense) be *Wise, shall shine as*
 ‘the

Eccl. 23.
 3, 4, 5, &c.

Dan. 12.
 3.

‘*the brightness of the Firmament, and*
 ‘*they that turn many to Righteousness,*
 ‘*as the Stars for ever and ever.* Tis
 ‘the general Complaint and Grief of
 ‘Persons truly Zealous, that there
 ‘are many more Wits and Grandees
 ‘now-adayes, who, by Perverting
 ‘God’s Gifts to the Service of Idols
 ‘(of Pride or Pleasure) of their own
 ‘setting up, resemble the Degenerate
 ‘*Jewish Church*, of whom God com-
 ‘plains by *Hosea*, that *she did not know* Hos. 2. 8.
 ‘*that He gave her the Corn and Wine*
 ‘*and Oyl, and multiplyed her Silver*
 ‘*and her Gold which they prepared*
 ‘*for Baal*; than that, (by an humble
 ‘Dedication of their Choicest Abili-
 ‘ties to God’s service) imitate holy
 ‘*David* and his Princes; who having
 ‘Consecrated their Gold and Silver
 ‘and Precious stones, towards the En-
 ‘riching and Embellishing of the Tem-
 ‘ple, Perfum’d that Vast Offering
 ‘with this Acknowledgment to God;
 ‘*All things come of thee and thine* Vers. 14.
 ‘*own have we given thee.* But though
 ‘now I know divers Great Persons
 ‘and Great Wits amongst us, who, ve-
 ‘ry unmindful of that Text, *What hast* 1 Cor. 4.
 ‘*thou that thou didst not receive,* like
 ‘those

Q

' those Ungratefull Clouds that Ob-
 ' scure the Sun that Rais'd them, Op-
 ' pose the Glory of that God who Ele-
 ' vated them to that Height; yet I do
 ' not absolutely Despair, that as God
 ' hath been pleas'd to make use of se-
 ' veral Royal Pens for the Tracing of
 ' his Word, and to make a Person
 ' Learned in all the Wisdome of the
 ' *Egyptians*, his First Secretary: so he
 ' will one day engage both the Gran-
 ' dees and the Wits to strive to Ex-
 ' piate by their Devotion and Service
 ' to the Scripture, the Injuries that Ir-
 ' religious Parts and Greatness have
 ' done it. I will not tell you *Theophilus*,
 ' that an Early Study of Religion would
 ' gain to its Party, most of those ma-
 ' ny Wits that will be sure to con-
 ' tend for what ever Opinion is expres-
 ' sed by the Wittiest things they can
 ' say. But I will tell you, that a par-
 ' ticular Consideration that makes me
 ' wish to see Witty Writers more
 ' generally employ their Pens on the
 ' behalf of Religion, is, that the Ser-
 ' vices they do it, Endear it to them: for
 ' as *Macchiavel* smartly observes, and as
 ' the Love of Parents and Nurses to
 ' Children may Evince; *La natura de*
 ' *gli*

Nicholo
Macchia-
velli, nel
libro del
Principe,
c. 10.

' *gli huomini è, così obligati per li bene-*
 ' *ficii che esse fanno, come per quelli che*
 ' *essi ricevono.* It is Natural to Men,
 ' to be as well Engag'd by the Kind-
 ' nesses they do, as by those they Re-
 ' ceive. And for the Encouragement
 ' of the Possessors of Great Parts to
 ' Employ them on Religious Themes,
 ' such as the Holy Scripture; I shall
 ' Represent to them, that even that Im-
 ' mortality of Name which Worldly
 ' Writers (for the Most Part) solely
 ' Aim at; is not by Pious Writers
 ' Less Found for being Last Sought:
 ' their Theme Contracts not their
 ' Fame by a true Diminution, but only
 ' by Comparison to a Greater Good:
 ' their Looking upon their Own Glory
 ' but as an Accession to God's, not
 ' Hindring Others from Praising that
 ' Wit and Eloquence they Praise God
 ' with; as Beauty made it self Admi-
 ' rers, though in Vestals; and a Rare
 ' Voice may Ravish us with a Psalm;
 ' or as the Jewels that Adorn'd-it,
 ' shone with their Wonted Luster on
 ' *Aaron's* Breast-Plate. Yes, as God-
 ' *liness is Profitable unto all things, ha-*
 ' *ving Promise of the Life that now is,*
 ' *and of that which is to come;* and as the
 ' *Q 2* ' Hundred

1 Tim. 4.
 8.

Mark 10.
30.

1 Pet. 5.
4.

'Hundred-fold now in this time ; is
'very Consistent with the *Eternal Life*
'in the World to come ; So is it very
'Possible for the same Pious Writer to
'have his Name Written, at once in
'both those Immortal Books of Life
'and Fame ; and , (like the Inspir'd
'Poet, Holy *David*,) wear as well
'Here a Crown of Lawrel , as Here-
'after , *τὴν ἀμάρτανον τῆς δόξης ἑσθλόν* ,
'that Unfading Crown of Glory Saint
'Peter speaks of. And though we are
'too Generally now a Dayes grown
'so Sinful , that we Scarce Relish any
'Composure that Endeavours to Re-
'claim us from being so ; yet Less
'Licentious and More Discerning
'Times, (which may be, perhaps, ap-
'proaching) will Repair the Omissi-
'ons and Fastidiousness of the Pre-
'sent, by an Eminent Gratitude to
'the Names of those , that have La-
'bour'd to Transmit to others, in the
'Handsome Dress they Durst give
'them, the Truths themselves most
'Valu'd. And I Observe, that though
'*Solomon* himself, delivered so many
'Thousand Songs and Proverbs , and
'the Nature of Beasts , Birds, Rep-
'tiles, and Fishes , together with the
'History

'History of Plants from the *Cedar of*
'*Lebanon* , even to the *Hyssop* that sprin-
'geth out of the Wall : yet those three
'only Treatises , design'd Peculiarly
'for the Instruction of the Church,
'Survive their lost Companions. And
'as Antiently the *Manna* which the
'Israelites gathered to Employ in their
'Domestick Uses , lasted not Unpu-
'trif'd above a Day or Two ; but
'that which they Lay'd up in the San-
'ctuary to Perpetuate or Secure God's
'Glory, continu'd whole Ages Uncor-
'rupted : so the Books Written to
'serve our Private turns of Interest or
'Fame, are oftentimes Short-liv'd ;
'when those consecrated to God's
'Honour, are, for that End's sake,
'Vouchsaf'd a Lastingness and kept
'from Perishing. - And those many
'Dull and Uneloquent Glosses and
'Expositions of the Antient Jews ,
'that the Merit of their Theme hath
'preserv'd for so many Ages , may
'assure us, that the Scripture doth of-
'ten make their Names and Writings
'that Illustrate it, Partakers of its own
'Prerogative of Immortality. Not to
'Mention that (according to that of
'the Psalmist , *I have more Understan-*
ding

1 King. 4.
31, 32, 33.

Exod. 16.
vers. 20.
33, 34.

Psal. 119.
99.

'ding than all my Teachers ; because
 '(כו) thy Testimonies are my Medita-
 'tion) such an Employment of Parts
 'doth oftentimes Invite God to En-
 'crease them ; as he that had Most
 'Talents committed to him, for Im-
 'proving them to his Lord's Service,
 'was Truſted with More of them ; and
 'he who employ'd ſome Few Cups of
 'his Wine to Entertain our Saviour,
 'had whole Veſſels of his VVater
 'turn'd into Better VVine. Certainly,
 'Transcendent Wits, when once they
 'Addict Themſelves to Theological
 'Compoſures, Improve and Grace
 'moſt Excellently Themes ſo ca-
 'pable of Being ſo Improv'd. They
 'need ſmall Time to Signalize their
 'Pens ; for Poſſeſſing already in a
 'Sublime Degree all the Requiſites
 'and Appropriates of Rare VVriters,
 'they need but Apply that Choice
 'Knowledge and Charming Elo-
 'quence to Divine Subjects, to handle
 'them to Admiration ; as *Hiram* ſuc-
 'ceſſfully uſ'd the Skil he had Learn-
 'ed in *Tyre*, in the Building and Ador-
 'ning of God's Temple ; and *Jephthah*
 'Victoriously Employ'd the Military
 'Gallantry and Art that had made
 'him

Mat. 25.
 28.

John 2. to
 the Tenth
 Verſe in-
 cluſively.

1 King. 7.
 13, 14
 &c.

'him conſiderable in the Land of *Tob*,
 'in Defending the Cauſe, and Defea-
 'ting the Enemies of God. Of this
 'Truth the Primitive Times afford us
 'Numerous and Noble Inſtances ;
 'but eſpecially that Stupendious Wit
 'Saint *Auſtin*, (whom I dare Oppoſe,
 'to any of the Wits that have Dar'd to
 'oppoſe the Scripture) the Producti-
 'ons of whoſe Wit in his Unregene-
 'rate State, and after his Converſion
 'to the Catholick Faith and Piety,
 'oblige me to Reſemble him to *Aaron's*
 'Rod ; (which ſuppoſing the Truth of
 'their Opinion that think it to be the
 'ſame that *Moses* uſ'd) whiſt it was
 'Employ'd abroad, did indeed for a
 'while work Wonders, that made it
 'much Admir'd : but when once it
 'came to be Laid up in the Taberna-
 'cle, unconfin'd to the uſual Laws of o-
 'ther Plants, it ſhot forth and afforded
 'permanent Fruit in a Night. But,
 'Theophilus, to Recover my ſelf at
 'length from my Over-prolix Di-
 'greſſion, I muſt Remember, that
 'twas Objected, that as well Divers
 'Great Princes and Great States-men,
 'as many Great Wits, Diſ-eſteem, or
 'at leaſt Neglect, the Scripture : And

Judg. 11.

Numb. 17.
 4, 8.

indeed, though I am Sorry it Cannot,
yet it must not be Deny'd, that Not-
withstanding all the Prerogatives of
the Bible, there needs not much Ac-
quaintance with Great Men, to show
many of them, that though they
Deny not God to be the Author,
Deny themselves the Blessing of be-
ing Readers of it: some out of La-
ziness, and others out of Pride:
both which Lurk under the Pretext
of Multiplicity of Important Avoca-
tions. But since, Your Quality,
Theophilus, and Station in the World,
may either make You Need to be
Arm'd against this Temptation, or
give you Opportunities to Assist those
that are Endanger'd by it, give me
leave on this Occasion, to tell you,
That those Grandees that pretend
Want of Leisure for their Neglect
of the Reading of the Scripture,
must be able to give a Rare Account
of all the Portions of their Time, to
make those Pass for a Mis-employ-
ment of it, that are Lay'd out to-
wards the Purchase of a Happy Eter-
nity, which 'tis not over-Modest for
those to expect from God, that
Grudge him the Rent of that Time,
of

of which they are but his Tenants
at Will. But to Manifest how un-
likely this Pretence is to pass Cur-
rent; I shall Represent, that in the
self-same Chapter where God fashi-
ons a King fit to Govern his own
People; he enjoyns concerning the
Book of the Law, that *It shall be* Deut. 17.
with him, and he shall Read therein 18, 19.
all the Dayes of his Life; which the
Next Verse intimates shall be there- vers. 20.
by Prolonged: and indeed it often
happens, that as *Samuel's* Barren Mo- 1 Sam. 2.
ther for Lending one of her Chil- 20, 21.
dren freely unto the Lord, was Blest
with many others; so the Dayes
Consecrated to God's Service, rather
Improve than Impoverish our Stock
of Time. Nay, the King was, (in vers. 18.
that Place of *Deuteronomy*) not onely
Oblig'd to Read the Law, but to
Write it too: upon which Sub-
ject, if I Mis-remember not, the
Learn'd'st of the Rabbies tells us, *Rambam*
that the King (as indeed God usually or, *Rabbi*
Charges Eminence of Place with *Moses ben*
Eminence of Piety) was Bound to *Naaimon*.
Write it out himself, and that, As
King: for though before his Ascen-
ding the Throne, as any other Israe-
lite,

Josh. i. 8.

'lite, he had a Transcript of his own
 'Writing; yet was there annex to
 'the Acquist of the Regal Scepter, a
 'Duty of Copying with the same
 'Hand that sway'd it. To *Joshuah* both
 'a General and a Judge; who was to
 'Wield the Swords, both of *Astrea*
 'and of *Bellona*; to Govern one Nu-
 'merous People and Conquer seven;
 'the Words of God are very Remar-
 'kable; *This Book of the Law shall not*
 'Depart out of thy Mouth, but thou shalt
 'Meditate therein Day and Night, that
 'thou maist observe to do according to all
 'that is Written therein; for then thou
 'shalt make thy way Prosperous, and then
 'thou shalt have good Success. *David*
 'was a Shepherd, a Conqueror, and
 'a King, and had certainly no Unfre-
 'quent Distractions, both Before he
 'came to the Crown, (whilst he liv'd
 'a Despis'd Younger-Brother, an
 'Envy'd Courtier, a Diffident Fugi-
 'tive, and a Distrusted Captain) and
 'After, whilst he Wore, Lost, and
 'Regain'd it: but how little the Time
 'employ'd in the Study of the Scrip-
 'ture prejudic'd his Secular Affairs,
 'his Story and Successes may attest;
 'and how Large a Portion of his Time
 'that

'that Study shar'd, You may be Plen-
 'tfully inform'd by Himself, and save
 'me the Transcribing much of the
 'Book of Psalms. He gather'd Bayes
 'both on *Parnassus* and in the Field of
 'Honor; and Equally Victorious in
 'Duels and in Battels, his Exploits
 'and his Conquests were Such, as
 '(Transcending those in Romances
 'almost as much in their Strangeness
 'as their Truth) needed an Infalible
 'Historian to Exact a Belief, their
 'Greatness and their Number would
 'disswade: he added to his Regal
 'Crown of Gold, Two others (of
 'Bayes and Lawrel) which his Suc-
 'cessfull Sword and Numerous Pen,
 'Making him both a Conqueror and a
 'Poet, Gain'd him from Victory and
 'the Muses: and yet for all this Great-
 'ness and this Fame, and that Multi-
 'tude of Distractions that still Attends
 'them, the (then Extant) Scripture
 'was so Unsever'dly his Study, and he
 'so Duely Match'd in his Practice what
 'the Apostle Couples in his Precept,
 '*Diligence in Business*, and *Fervency* Rom. 12.
 '*in Spirit*, that 'tis not Easie Fitlier
 'to Resemble him, than to the Wing'd
 'Cherubims in the Old Tabernacle,
 'whom

Deut. 25.
18, 19, 20,
21.

‘whom all the Gold and Jewels that
 ‘Glittered about them, and all the
 ‘Clouds of Incense Fum’d before
 ‘them, could never divert from a Fix’d
 ‘Posture towards the Ark of the Te-
 ‘stimony that Contain’d the Law, and
 ‘the Mercy-Seat that Represented
 ‘Christ. And indeed, ’tis a Saying
 ‘Equally Antient and True, That
 ‘None should know (things Better
 ‘and) Better Things than Princes.
 ‘For their Virtues and their Vices par-
 ‘ticipate the Eminence and Authority
 ‘of their Condition; and by an Influ-
 ‘ential Exemplariness, so Generally
 ‘Fashion and Sway their Subjects,
 ‘that as we find in Sacred Story that
 ‘the Jewes serv’d God or *Baal* as their
 ‘Kings did; so Prophane History tells
 ‘us, that *Rome* was Warlike under
 ‘*Romulus*, Superstitious under *Numa*,
 ‘and so Successively Moulded into the
 ‘Dispositions of her Several Princes.
 ‘Subjects, all the World over, being
 ‘apt to think Imitation a Part of the
 ‘Duty of Obedience: and being Ge-
 ‘nerally but too Sensible of the Re-
 ‘quisiteness of their being Like their
 ‘Prince to the being Lik’d by Him; A
 ‘State, like *Nebuchadnezzar*’s Mysteri-
 ‘ous

‘ous Image, should have the Head of
 ‘Gold; and the Inferior Members of Dan. 2.
 ‘a Value Proportionate to their Vici- 31, 32.
 ‘nity to that Noblest Part. When &c.
 ‘once I shall see such Monarchies and
 ‘Common-wealths no Rarities; and
 ‘see the Addictedness of Princes to
 ‘the Study of the Scripture, Further
 ‘the Ulterior Accomplishment of that
 ‘Part of it, which once Promis’d Gods
 ‘People, *that Kings should be its Nur-* Esay 49.
 ‘*sing Fathers, and their Queens its* 23.
 ‘*Nursing Mothers*; I shall Expect to
 ‘see the Golden Age elsewhere than
 ‘in Poets Dreams. For I take not
 ‘Absoluteness to be like a Plague,
 ‘whose Almost boundless Power is
 ‘Confin’d to Do Mischief; but I e-
 ‘steem Sovereignty little less Appli-
 ‘cable and Effectual to Good than
 ‘Ill: *Trajan* and *Constantine* were as
 ‘Great and Publick Blessings, as *Nero*
 ‘or *Caligula* were Mischiefs; and Vir-
 ‘tue on a Throne hath not a much
 ‘less Imperious Influence, than
 ‘Crowned Vice. And accordingly I
 ‘shall permit my Good Wishes for
 ‘Mankind to turn Expectations, when
 ‘I shall generally see Sovereigns No-
 ‘bly contend for as great a Superiority
 ‘over

'over Each other by their Vertues, as
 'they possess over their Subjects by
 'their Fortune ; when I shall see *Po-*
 '*tentates* make use of *Mars's* Sword,
 'but to Restrain others from Abusing
 'it ; and Kings affect their Resem-
 'blance to God , less in his Unlimi-
 'tedness of Power than his Employ-
 'ment of it. But , to step Back in-
 'to my Way , and, leaving Princes to
 'fitter Monitors , say something to
 'Men of either Great Titles or Em-
 'ployments. There's none of these
 'Pragmatical Persons that will suffer
 'himself to be so Enslav'd to his Bu-
 'siness, but he will allow himself Set
 'Times , and can Daily Find Leisure
 'for Eating , Drinking , and other
 'Corporal Refections, and Frequent-
 'ly for Recreations ; and Certainly,
 'if we Valu'd not our Bodies above
 'our Souls, we would, in spite of the
 'Urgency of Secular Affairs and Em-
 'ployments, Reserve and Set apart
 'Some Time to Feed our Souls, with
 'their true Food, God's Word ; else
 'we shall never be Able to say of God
 'with Holy *Job* ; *I have esteemed the*
 '*Words of his Mouth more than my Ne-*
 '*cessary Food.* I will not urge that *Da-*
 '*niel,*

'niel, whose Vast Abilities had a Re-
 'sembling Theater, and who Surpass'd
 'other States-men as much in the
 'Number and Weight of the Affairs
 'he had to Manage , as in the Excel-
 'lent Spirit and Dexterity wherewith
 'he Manag'd them , amidst Transacti-
 'ons that Buri'd Sixscore Princes, who
 'Loaded him with a Weight (of
 'Business) capable to have Crush'd
 '*Atlas* , could yet find Leasure to
 'Study the Prophet *Jeremy* : because
 'twill be perhaps more proper to
 'Mention , that even *Macchiavel* him-
 'self, that Secretary and Reputed Ora-
 'cle of State, could find Time not Only
 'to Read but to Write Playes, (some
 'of which I have seen in Italian) such
 'as I would not think Excellent,
 'though a Person from whom so much
 'might be Expected , had not Writ-
 'ten them. Let us not then Think our
 'Business or our Recreations a suffici-
 'ent Dispensation from an Employ-
 'ment, for which, were they Incon-
 'sistent, they ought Both to be De-
 'clin'd ; since it is both more Con-
 'cerning than the First, and more Satis-
 'fying than the Latter. But that
 'which is often the True , though sel-
 'dome

Dan. 6. 21

Dan. 9. 21

'dome the Avowed Cause of these
 'Men's Neglect of the Scripture, is
 'not their Unleasur'dness, but their
 'Pride; which makes them think it
 'too Mean and Trivial an Employ-
 'ment for one that is Great and Wise
 'enough to Counsel and Converse
 'with Princes, and have a Vote or
 'Hand in those Great Enterprizes and
 'Transactions that make such a Noise
 'in the World, and are the Loud
 'Themes of the People's Talk and
 'Wonder; to Amuse themselves to
 'Examine the Significations of Words
 'and Phrases. For my part I am no
 'Enemy to the Calling of States-men;
 'I think their Profession as Requisite as
 'others in a Common-wealth; and
 'should think it very Injurious to De-
 'ny them any part of a Purchase they
 'pay their Care and Time for: nor
 'perhaps have I so little Study'd the
 'Improvements of Quiet, as to think
 'my self Less Oblig'd than others are,
 'to those whose Watchings or Pro-
 'tection Affords it or Secures it me. But
 'after all this is said, I love to Look
 'upon the World with his Eyes that
 'is justly said to *Humble himself* (when
 'he Vouchsafes) *to behold the things*
 'that

'that are done in Heaven and in Earth;
 'and to take Measure of the Dimen-
 'sions of Things by the Scale his
 'Word holds forth. Now in the
 'Esteem of him that Hath made all
 'things for himself, and of whom his
 'Spirit by his Prophet truly sayes, that
 'the Nations are as a Drop of a
 'Bucket, and are counted as the small
 'Dust of the Ballance, Nay, that All
 'Nations before him (are) as Nothing,
 'and they are counted to him less than
 'Nothing and Vanity; the Importan-
 'test Employments are the Study and
 'the Glory of God. He Created this
 'Vast Fabrick of the World to ma-
 'nifest his Wisdome, Power, and
 'Goodness; and in it Created Man,
 'that it may have an Intelligent Spe-
 'cator, and a Resident whose Ratio-
 'nal Admiration of so Divine a Stru-
 'cture, may Accrue to the Glory of
 'the Omniscient and Almighty Ar-
 'chitect. And as he Created the
 'World to manifest some of his As-
 'tributes, so doth he Uphold and Go-
 'vern it to Disclose others of them.
 'The Revolution of Monarchies, the
 'Fates of Princes, and Destinies of
 'Nations, are but Illustrious Instan-

 Esay 40.
 13.-17.

ces and Proclamations of his Providence. The whole Earth once Perish'd by Water to Signalize his Justice on his Enemies; and the whole World shall one Day Perish by Fire to (Exercise that Former Attribute and) Evidence his Goodness to his Children: for whom his Faithfulness to his Promises will Oblige him to Build a Glorious Mansion for such Glorify'd Residents. The Angels, some of whom the Visions of *Daniel* Represent us at the Helm of Kingdomes and of Empires, and whose Power is so Great, that One of them could in One Night Destroy a Force capable, if Divided, to have made half a Dozen Formidable Armies; these Glorious Spirits, I say, whose Nature so Transcends ours, that the very Devil can without the Assistance of Virtue, Despise the Objects of our Ambition by a Superiority of Nature onely; for all their high Prerogatives and Employments, think the Mysteries unfolded in Scripture, worthy their Bowing as well as Desire to Look into: think not themselves too Eminent to be Messengers and Heralds, of which Fond

Mortals

Dan. 10.
3.

2 King.
9. 35.

Isaiah.
40. 1.
Pat. 1.
82.

Mortals think themselves too Eminent to Read: and (being all *Ministring Spirits sent forth to Minister to them* Heb. 1. 14. *who shall be Heirs of Salvation*;) disdain not to think our Instruction worth their Concern, whilst we disdain a Concern for our Own Instruction; Nay, the very Messias, whose Style is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, though he be not Recorded to have ever Read but Once; did yet Read the Scripture; and think it worthy his Expositions and Recommending; and well may any think that Book worth the Reading, that God himself thought worth the Enditing. When *Moses* and *Elias* left their (Local not Real) Heaven, and Appeared in Glory to converse with our Transfigured Saviour on the Mount; their Discourse was not of the Government of Kingdomes, or the Raising of Armies for the Subversion of Empires; or of those other solemn Trifles, which Heaven places as much beneath Men's Thoughts as Residence; but of (the Inspir'd Book's Chief Theme) *His Decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*. And after that *St. Paul* had been Caught

Revel. 17.
14.

Luke 4.
17. 66.

Luke 9.
31.

2 Cor. 12.
2. ' up to the Third Heaven, and had
' been Blest and Refin'd with his In-
' effable Entertainment there; I won-
' der not to find him profess so reso-
' lutely, that He *counteth all things*
Phil. 3. 8. ' *but loss for the Excellency of the*
' *Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord;*
' *in whom Faith cometh by Hearing, and*
Rom. 10.
17. ' *that Hearing, of the Word of God;* and
' who addresses Men to the Scriptures,
' as those which Testifie of him. And
' perhaps our Saviour us'd so frequent-
' ly to conclude his Divine Discour-
' ses, with that just Epiphonema, *He*
John 5.
32. ' *that hath Ears to hear, let him hear,* but
' to Teach us, that there is no Employ-
' ment of our Faculties that more de-
' serve their Utmost Attention, than the
' Scrutiny of Divine Truths. That
' which is pretended to by this Dis-
' course, is to Impress this Truth, That
' where God is allow'd to be an Intel-
' ligent and Equal Valuer of Things,
' a Man cannot have so Great an Em-
' ployment, as to give him Cause to
' think the Study of the Scripture a
' Mean one: since, Thus saith the
Jer. 19. 23,
24. ' Lord, *Let not the Wise-man Glory in his*
' *Wisdom, neither let the Mighty man*
' *Glory in his Might, let not the Rich man*
' *Glory*

' *Glory in his Riches: But let him that*
' *Glorieth, glory in this, that he Under-*
' *standeth and Knoweth me.* For sure, if
' the Knowledge of God be so Glori-
' ous a thing, the Study of that Book
' whence that Knowledge is Extracted,
' and where tis most Refulgent, is not a
' Despicable Employment. Which sure
' (to add That upon the By) 'tis some-
' what Injuriously Thought by those,
' who are so Industrious and Proud
' in Prophane Histories and other Po-
' litical Books to Discover (or even
' Guess at) those Intrigues, which
' commonly but tell us, by what Craf-
' ty Arts a Knave Cosen'd a Fool.
' Nor (to mention this by the By) even
' in Relation to his Own Profession, is
' the Scripture Unable to recompense
' the Study of a Christian States-man;
' for to omit the (perhaps too) Extol-
' ling Mention *Macchiavel* him- self
' makes of *Moses* amongst the Famou-
' sest Legislators; the Historical part
' of the Bible being endited by an Om-
' niscient and Unerring Spirit, layes
' clearly open the True and Genuine
' Causes of the Establishment, Flou-
' rishing, and Vicissitudes of the Prin-
' ces and Common-wealths it Relates

The Apo-
logist for,
and Anta-
gonist of
Roman-
ces.

the Story of. Whereas other Histo-
ries (for Reasons insisted on in other
Papers) are liable to Great Suspicions
in the Judgment of those that Duely
ponder the Several Narratives made
often of the same Transaction or E-
vent by Several Eye-witnesses: and
that the true Secret of Counsels is so
Closely Lock'd up, or so Artificially
Disguised, that to have Interest e-
nough to Discern (what States-men
Mind and Build on) the Truth and
Mystery of Affairs, one must be
Bias'd and Engag'd enough to be
Shrewdly Tempted to be a Partial
Relator of them. But, *Theophilus*, I
perceive I have slip'd into too Long a
Digression; which yet I hope you
will Pardon as the Effect of an In-
discreet, perhaps, but however a
Great Concern for a Person, to whom
Nature, Education, and Fortune have
been so Indulgent, that I cannot but
look upon his Condition as lyable to
the Temptations which either Parts
or Employments Singly, and much
more Both together, are wont to ex-
pose men to.

You may remember, *Theophilus*, that
among the Answers which I told You
might

The fifth
and last
Answer
to the
last Ob-
jection.

might be made to those that Objected
against the Scripture, *That it is so una-
dorn'd, and so ill furnish'd with Eloquent
Expressions, that 'tis wont to prove Ineffi-
cacious, especially upon Intelligent Readers,*
The fifth and last was this, *That 'tis
very far from being agreeable to Expe-
rience, that the Style of the Scripture does
make it Unoperative upon the Generality
of its Readers, if they be not Faultily in-
dispos'd to receive Impressions from it.*

To make good this Reply, I must
take Notice to You, that, that part of
the Objection which intimates that In-
telligent Readers are not wont to be
wrought upon by the Scripture, has
been in great part Answer'd already;
For I have lately observ'd to You, that
as it may be granted, that *some* Witty
Men, who have Read the Scripture,
have instead of Admiring it, Quar-
rell'd with it; so it cannot be deny'd,
that *many* Persons as Eminent for Wit
as they, have upon Reading it Enter-
tain'd a high Veneration for it. So that
I see not why the Celebrations of those
Wits that Admire it, may not Coun-
ter-balance the Dis-respects of those
that Cavil at it. Especially if we con-
sider, that as to most of those that are

look'd upon as the Witty Disregarders of the Scripture, scarce any thing so much, as the Vanity and Boldness of owning that they Disregard it, makes them (but Undeservedly) be Look'd upon as Wits.

But to this, I shall now add, that whereas the Objection speaks of Intelligent Readers, the greatest Part of such have not that Quickness which is wont to make Men pass for Wits, though they may have other Abilities more Solid, and desirable: And yet that the Bible has a great Influence upon this Latter sort of Intelligent Readers, I presume You will easily Believe, if You consider how many Great Scholars, not onely Profess'd Divines, but others, have by their Learned Comments and other Writings, endeavour'd either to Illustrate, or Recommend the Scripture; and how much a Greater number of Understanding and Sober Men, that never Publish'd Books, have Evinc'd the Scriptures Power over them, partly by their Sermons and other Discourses, Publick and Private, and partly by endeavouring to Conform their Lives to the Dictates of it: Which last Clause I add, because

cause You can scarce make a better Estimate of what Power the Scripture has upon Men, than by looking at what it is able to make them Part with. For not to Anticipate what we shall ere long have occasion to mention, Let us but consider what Numbers of Intelligent Persons almost every Age, without excepting our own, (as degenerate as it is,) has produc'd, who have been Taught and Prevail'd with by the Scripture, and Considerations drawn thence, to Renounce all the greatest sinfull Pleasures, and Imbrace a Course of Life that oftentimes exposes them to the greatest Dangers, and very frequently to no small Hardships.

And indeed there is scarce any sort of Men on which the Scripture has not had a Notable Influence, as to the Reforming and Improving many particular Persons, belonging to it; and to the giving them an Affectionate Veneration for the Book, whereunto they bow'd their Instruction. The Accompts Ecclesiastical History gives us of the Rate at which Devout Persons; both in former and latter Ages, would Purchase the Bible, when it was Dangerous and perhaps Capital, to be found pos-

possess'd of it, would, if I should here repeat them, much Confirm what I say, and might equally Create our Wonder and our Blushes, Those sorts of profess'd Christians that seem the most Evidently to be yable to Temptations to Neglect, or Disregard the Scripture, are either those that Do, or would pass for Wits, or those that live in Courts: The Former oftentimes thinking themselves too Wise to be Taught, especially by a Book they think not Eloquent, and among the Latter there being but too many whose Pleasures are so Bewitching, or so Dear to them, that they like nothing that would Divert, much less Divorce them from their Pursuit, or else whose Business is so Much and perhaps so Important, that they have not Leisure enough to Learn, or have too much Pride to think they need do it: But yet ev'n among those, that have worn Crowns either of Gold or Bays, or (what perhaps some value above both) of Myrtle, the Bible has not wanted Votary's: For not to repeat the Names of those whom I have formerly mention'd to have been as well Lovers of the Scripture, as Favourites of the Muses, among the other sort

sort of Men, *Those that* (to speak in Luke 7. *ours Saviours Terms*) *are Gorgeously* ^{25.} *Apparell'd, Live Delicately, and are in Kings Courts*, there have been Divers Persons, upon whom the Power of the Scripture has been almost as Conspicuous, as their Station among men. I will not mention that Devout Treasurer of the *Aethiopian* Queen, who ev'n upon the High-way (whose Length neither Deterr'd nor Tir'd his Devotion) could not forbear to read the Prophet *Isaiah*, and enquire ev'n of a Meer Stranger that pass'd by Alone, and on Foot, the Meaning of a Passage of whose Sense he Doubted. Nor will I Urge any other Instances of Great men's Studiousness of the Scripture, afforded us by Sacred Story: And therefore I shall not press the Example of that Great and Wise *Daniel*, whose Matchless Parts not only cast upon him the Highest Employment of the Worlds Monarchy, and Disengag'd him from the Ruines of it: But (what has scarce a President amongst the very Wisest States-men) Continu'd him in as much Greatness as ever he possess'd under the Predecessour, under

under the Successor; and such a Successor too as made his Predecessors Carcase the Ascent to his Throne; I will not I say at present Urge the Examples Extant in the Sacred Records of Great Mens Studiousness of them, because ev'n Secular and more Recent Histories may inform us, that ev'n in Courts All mens Eyes have not been so Dazl'd by the Glittering Vanities that are wont to Abound there, but that Some of them have Discern'd, and Practically Acknowledged the Prerogatives of the Scripture. Though I cannot say that Many Kings have been of this Number, because there have been but Few Kings in all; in respect of the Numbers that compose the Inferiour Conditions of Men, yet ev'n among These, and in Degenerate Ages, some have been signally studious of the Bible, such was that sixth *Edward*, who Imitated the early active Piety of *Joash*, without Imitating his Defection from it, and whose short Heavenly Life manifest, how soon, ev'n amidst the Temptations of Courts, Grace can ripen Men for Glory; and such was that Learned King, whose having more than

King
James.

then Perfunctorily study'd the Scripture, his solid Defence of Divers or it's Truths against it's Mis-interpreters have sufficiently Proclaim'd to the World. Nay, even in those Darker times that preceded the Reformation, that Excellent *Aragonian King, Alphonsus*, the Honour both of his Title and his Times, in spite of his Contemplations and his Wars, could, (as himself us'd to Glory) spare Time from Studies and his Distractions, to read the Bible Forty times with Comments and Glosses on it: being not for all his Astronomy, so taken up with the Contemplation of Heaven, as to deny himself leisure to Study in his Book that made it the Wayes of getting thither. Nor shall I forbear to mention here the Last Pope (*Urban* the eighth) who when being Cardinal, he wanted not the Hopes of becoming both Temporal and Ecclesiastical Lord of that Proud City, which (as if she were design'd to be still, one way or other, the World's Mistress) doth still rule little less of the World upon the score of Religion, than she did before upon that of Arms; in the midst of

of Affairs perhaps More Distracting than busy'd most Potentates, and Honours almost as Great as are pay'd to Monarchs, could find Room in a Head Crowded with Affairs enough to have Distress'd *Macchiavel*, for Reflections upon the Scripture; some of whose Portions I have Delighted to read in the handsom Paraphrases of his Pious Muse. Which I scruple not to acknowledge, because that though I did, which I do not, look upon every one that Dissents from me, as an Enemy; yet I should be apt to think that they can scarce Love Vertue enough, that Love it not in their very Enemies; congruously to which we find that *Hannibal* had Statutes Erected in *Rome* it self: and though I were so Uncharitable and so Unexperienc'd as to think a Man that holds an Error can scarce have any Good Qualities, yet upon such a kind of score as that which made *David* so Angry with him that took away the Poor Man's Single Lamb, the Fewer Commendable Quality's I see in my Adversaries, the more Scruple I would make to Rob them of any way of them. Nor hath that very Sex that so often

often makes Divertisements it's Employments, been altogether barren in Titled Votaries to the Scripture. Not to mention that *Grecian* Princess, whose Profelyted Muse made *Homer* turn Evangelist, how Conversant that Excellent Mother and Resembling Daughter, *Paula* and *Eustochium*, were in the Sacred Roles, is scarce unknown to any that are not Strangers to the Writings of St. *Hierome*; for some of whose Learned Comments on the Scripture, we are Endebted to the Charitable Importunity of their Requests. And even in Our Times, that so much Degenerate from the Primitive ones, how Eminent a Student and Happy a Proficient in the Study of the Bible, that Glory of Princesses, and the Envy of the Princes of her Time, Queen *Elizabeth*, was, her Life and Reign sufficiently declare. Her Sister's Predecessor, that Matchless *Lady Jane*, who had all the Qualities the Best Patriots could desire in a Queen, but an Unquestionable Title, and in whose Sad Fate, besides her Sex and the Graces that Enamour ours of it, her Countrey, Philosophy, Virtue, and Religion, did all

Eudoxia
Wife to
the Em-
perour
Theodosius.

all sustain a Loss, was a Conspicuous Studier of the Inspir'd Books; wherein her Prospered Sedulousness gave her an Understanding much above her Age and Sex; though not above her Vertue. And besides *Eudoxia*, there have been divers other Persons of the Highest Quality of that Sex, and ev'n some of those on whom Nature or Fortune, or rather Beauty or Providence had conferr'd a Sovereignty, whom the Splendour, the Pleasures, nor the Avocations of Courts could not keep from Searching in Gods Word Preservatives against the Contagion of their Condition; and partly History, and partly ev'n Conversation have sometimes with Delight made me Observe, how some of those Celebrated Ladies, whose Fatal Beauties have made so many Idolaters, have Devoutly turn'd those Fair Eyes, that Were, and Did such Wonders, upon those Severe Writings that Depreciate all but the Beauty of the Soul, from those Flattering Ascriptions that Deify'd that of the Body. And 'tis not to be marvell'd at, that such Readers as are not Infidels, by reading the Bible Once
should

should be prevail'd with to read it Oftner, not only because of the Inviting Excellency of what it Teaches; but because its Author do's so Earnestly in it Enjoyn the Study of it, that scarce any can think the Neglect of it no Fault, save those that are Guilty of it. Nor is their so Assiduous Perusal of the Scripture so much to be Marvell'd at, as Commended, in Persons of that Softer Sex, which is perhaps more susceptible than ours of Strong Impressions of Devotion. For sure, if we Lov'd God, I do not say as we Ought to love HIM, but as we Can, and Do love Inferiour things, would hugely Endear the Scripture to us, that the Object of our Devotion is the Author of that Book. When a True Flame, though but for a Fading Object, doth once possess a Fervent Lover's Breast; what a Fondness doth his Passion for his Mistress give him for all things Related to her: Her Residencies, her Walks, her Colours, and the least Trifles that have belonged to her, Exact a Kindness that's not due to Trifles: though it be but for Presenting to his Memory it's almost only Object, and refresh-
S ing

ing him with an Ideal in the Absence of an Immediater Presence of her. But if the Favour'd Amorist be Blest with any Lines Dignified by that Fair Hand (give me leave to talk of Lovers in their own Language) especially if they be Kind as well as Her's, how Assiduously, and with what Raptures do his greedy Eyes peruse them, tasting each several Expression with its own Transport; and finding in Each Line, at each New Reading, some New Delight or Excellency: This Welcom Letter grows sooner Old than Stale; and all his two frequent Kisses have worn it to Tatters, (in which he Preserves it, if not Worships it too, as a Relique) with still Fresh, and still Insatiate Avidities doth the unwearied Lover prize that (too often, either Deduding or Insignificant) Writing, above the Noblest Raptures of Poets, and Liberallest Patents of Princes, and (not to Urge the Superstitious Devotion of our Worshippers of Relicks) certainly if we had for God but Half as much Love as we Ought, or ev'n Pretend to have, we could not but Frequently (if not Transportedly) Entertain

ertain our selves with his Leaves, which (as Parrhelions to the Sun) are at once his Writings and his Picture: both Expressing his Vast and Unmerited Love to us; and Exhibiting the most Approaching or least Unresembling Idea of our Beloved, that the Deity hath fram'd for Mortals to apprehend. 'Twas the Devout Quarrel of a Devout Father to some of the choicest Compositures Antiquity hath left us, that he could not find Christ Nam'd there, and if, as 'tis not to be Doubted, divers of the Devout Lady's I was Lately speaking of, were of his Mind, sure at that Rate they were not Ordinarily kind to the Scripture; where the Prophets and the Apostles, those Darker and more Clear Evangelists, do so Unanimously and Assiduously Celebrate the *Messiah*, that when I Read and Confer them, I sometimes Fancy my self present at our Saviour's Triumphant Entrance into *Hierusalem*, where both *Those that went before him, and those that follow'd after him, sung Hosannah to the Son of David.*

Mat. 21.
9.
Mark 11.
9.

Wherefore, since ev'n Great Wits, Great Princes, and Great Beauty's, have not still by all those

Temptations to which these Attributes Expos'd them, been kept from being also Great Votaries to the Scripture, it cannot Charitably be Doubted, but that in Most Ages some Pious Persons have been able to say Truly to God in

Jerem. 15.
16.

Jeremy's Terms, Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and thy Word was to me the Joy and Rejoycing of mine Heart: and if the Persons I Mention have been but Few, I can attribute that Fewness but to the Paucity of Wise and Good Men; And as for Persons of other Ranks, in Ecclesiastical Stories, the Instances are not so Rare of the Addictedness of God's Children to his Word, but that we might thence produce them almost in Throngs, if we had not Nobler Inducements to the Reading of the Inspir'd Volume than Example: and if it were not Less to be Venerated, because so many Saints have Study'd it, as because the Study of it made many of those men Saints, (I mean not Nominal but Real ones:) which we need not much Wonder at, whilst such a Saint as Saint Paul was, assures us, that it is All of it Divinely Inspir'd and Improveable to all the

2 Tim. 3.
16.

the Uses Requisite to the Entire Accomplishment of God's Servants. But *Theophilus*, to Return to what I was formerly Discoursing of, the Transforming Power the Scripture has upon many of its Readers, I must subjoyn, that though through the Goodness of God, these be farr more Numerous than the professed Adversaries and Contemners of the Scripture, yet these make not so Great a Part of those that acknowledge the Bible, as it were well they did, because both Experience and our Saviours Parable have sufficiently taught us, that Good seed, do's not alwayes fall into Good ground, and that many Intervening Accidents may, after it has been sown, make it Miscarry and prove Fruitless: But when You find (as I fear You may but too often) that the Scripture has not upon its Readers, and Especially upon those that are Prophane, that Power which I seem'd to Ascribe to it, and which it Ought to have; You may be pleas'd to Remember, that I plainly suppose in my fifth Answer, that those to whom the Scripture is Address'd, must not be Culpably Indispos'd to be

John 7.
17.

Wrought upon by it. Which that Prophane Persons are, I presume You will easily Grant; For when our Saviour said, that *If any Man will do the Will of him that sent him, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or no*: He clearly Intimates, that there is requir'd a Disposition as well in the Eye of his Soul, (if I may so speak) as in the Object propos'd, to make a Man Discern the Excellency and Origination of what is Taught, how Valuable soever. Saint Paul, speaking of himself and other Pen-men and Teachers of the Scriptures, affirms, that *They speak Wisdom among them that are Perfect*, (and though not this World's Wisdom, Yet) *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even that Hidden one which God ordain'd before the World, unto our Glory*. But for these Scorners, 'tis no Wonder they so Fruitlessly Read the Scripture, without Descrying any of this Mystrious Wisdom, it being a Sentence of the Scripture it self, *that a Scornor seeketh Wisdom, and [findeth it] not*, (the Expression is Odd in the Original, but I must not stay to Descant upon it) as the *Sodomites* could
not

1 Cor. 2.
7.

Prov. 14.
6.

not find the Angels; when once they sought them to Prostitute and Defile them. Gen. 19.
5-11.

But Besides Prophane Wits, there are too many other Readers, who are (more or less) Guilty of Opposing the Reforming and Improving Influence of the Scripture, upon their own Hearts; either upon the Score of their not Sufficiently Believing the Truths Contain'd in the Scripture, or upon that of their not Duly Pondering them. That Unbelief is the Fruitful Mother of more Sins than are wont to be imputed to it, and that many Baptiz'd Persons are not free from greater Degrees of it, than they are Suspected of by others, or ev'n by themselves, I could here easily Manifest, if I had not professedly Discours'd of that Subject in another place. And indeed, there needs but a Comparing of most Men's Lives with the Promises and Threats held forth in the Scripture of no less than Everlasting Joyes and Endless Torments, to make us believe that there are Multitudes of Profess'd Christians, to whom may be Apply'd what the Writer to the Hebrews sayes
of

Heb 4.
2

of the perverse Jewes of Old, *That what they heard did not profit them, not being mix'd with Faith in them that heard it*, or (as the Greek will bear) because they were not United by Faith to the things they heard. But this is not all, For oftentimes the Doctrines of the Scripture Lose much of their Efficacy, ev'n where they are Cordially believ'd, because they are not sufficiently Laid to Heart. The Disparity of the Influences of the Bare Belief and the Due Perpension of a Truth, is Methinks, Conspicuous enough in Men's Thoughts of Death. For though, That they shall Dye, is so Truly Believ'd, that it cannot Seriously be Doubted; Yet how doth Mens Inadvertency make them Live Here, as if they were to Do so Always? whereas when once Grace, Sicknes, the Sight of a Dying Friend, or some other Tragick Spectacle, hath seriously minded them of Death, 'tis Amazing to Observe how strange an Alteration is produc'd in their Lives by the Active and Permanent Impression of that One Obvious and Unquestioned Truth, That those Lives must have a Period;
and

and to see how much the Sober Thoughts of Death, contribute to Fit Men for it: it being so Imperious an Inducement to Deny Ungodly and Worldly Lusts, and to Live *καρποῦναι καὶ δικαιοῦναι δὲ ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι*, *Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World*, that we must one day Leave it; that I Admire not much that Father's Celebrated Strictness and Austerity, who tells us, that he Fancy'd alwayes Sounding in his inward Ears, that Dreadful Alarum of, *Surgite Mortui & Venite ad Judicium*.

Yet Notwithstanding the Indisposition of many Readers to Reverence and Obey the Scripture, and Notwithstanding that in Divers Passages of it, the Ornaments of Language are (for Reasons above specify'd) purposely Declin'd; Yet we find not, but that the Scripture for all these Disadvantages, is by the Generality of its Readers, both Esteem'd and Obey'd at another guess Rate, than any other Book of Ethicks or Devotion. And Multitudes ev'n of those whose Passions, or Interests, will not suffer them to be in some Points Guided by it, are

Not;

Tit. 2.
12.

Mark 12.
37.

Notwithstanding Sway'd by it, to Forbear or Practise divers things in Cases wherein other Books would not Prevail with them. As *Herod*, though the Baptist could not perswade him to Quit his *Herodias*, did yet upon *John's* Preaching do Many other things, and *heard him Gladly*, ——— I was going to say, that we may not unfitly Apply to the Word of God, what Divines have Observ'd of God the Word; for as those Accidents that Loudliest Proclaim'd our Saviours having Assum'd our Human Nature and Infirmities, were attended with some Circumstances, that Conspicuously Attested his Divinity; so in those Passages in which the Majesty of the Authors Style is most veiled and Disguis'd, there is yet some Peculiarity that Discloses it. But I shall Less scruple to tell You, that in Divers of those Passages in which the Holy Ghost (who in the Greek Father's wonted Expression, does often *συγκαταβαίνειν ἡμῖν*, stoop to our Capacity, and as it were, Sink himself down Level;) seems most to have Vouchsaf'd a Condescension to the Style of Men; and

to have Commanded his Secretaries, as he once did the Prophet *Esay*, to Write, *בְּכֶרֶת אֵנוֹשׁ* *Be-cheret Enosh*, With a Mans Pen; in divers of those Very Places, I say, there is something of so Awfull, and so Peculiarly His, that as the Sun, Ev'n when he Descends into the West, remains still Lucider than any of the Stars; so the Divine Inspirer of the Scriptures, ev'n when his Style seems most to Stoop to our Capacities, doth yet Retain a Prerogative above meerly Human Writings. *Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning of the World*, sayes an Apostle; and God, whose Attribute is to be *καρδιωγνῶσκος*, The Knower of Hearts, and whose Prerogative 'tis to *Form the Spirit of Man within him, Understandeth our Thoughts afar off*. Certainly then, if we Consider God as the Creator of our Souls, and so likeliest to Know, the Frame, and Springs, and Nature of his own Workmanship; we shall make but little Difficulty to Believe that in the Book Written For, and Address'd To Men, he hath Employ'd very Powerfull and Appropriated Means to Work upon them.

Iſa. 8. 1.

Acts 15.
18.

Acts 1.
24.
Zech. 1.
1.
Pſal. 13.
2.

them. And in Effect, there is a strange Movingness, and, if the Epithet be not too Bold, a kind of Heav'nly Magick to be found in some Passages of the Scripture, which is to be found nowhere else; and will not easily be Better Exprest than in the Proper Terms of the Scripture; *For the Word of God, (sayes It) is Quick and Powerfull, and Sharper than any Two-edged Sword, piercing even to the Dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joynts and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* Wherefore, that *Junius*, (as Himself Relates) was Converted from a kind of Atheist to a Believer, upon the Reading of the First Chapter of *John*: that a Rabbi, by his Own Confession, was Converted from a Jew to a Christian, by the Reading of the Fifty third of *Esay*; that Saint *Austin* was chang'd from a *Debauche* into a Saint, by that Passage of the 13th to the *Romans* and the 13th Verse; and that another Father, whose Fear had made him Disclaim his Faith, burst out publicly into a Showr of Tears, upon the Occasional Reading of the 16th Verse of

Heb. 4.
12.

of the Fiftieth *Psalms*; are Effects, that I do not so much Admire, as I do that Such are Produc'd no Oftner. And truly for my own Part, the Reading of the Scripture hath Mov'd me more, and Sway'd me more Powerfully to all the Passions it would Infuse, than the Wittiest and Eloquentest Composures that are Extant in our Own and some other Languages. Nay, so Winning is the Majesty of the Scripture, that many (like those that fall in Love in Earnest with the Ladies they first Courted, but out of (what the French call) Gallantry;) who began to Read it out of Curiosity, have found themselves Engag'd to Continue that Exercise out of Conscience: and not a few of those, that did at first Read the New Testament onely to Learn some Unknown Language it is Translated into, or for some such Trivial Purpose, have been by the Means that they Elec'ted, carried beyond the End that they Design'd, and met a Destiny not ill Resembling that of *Zacheus*, who Climbing up into a Sycamore Growing in our Saviour's Way, only to Look upon Him, pass'd thence to be his Profelyte and Convert;

Luke 19.
2 v. 1. 11
v. 10.

Mat. 13.
19, 20,
&c.

Convert; and to Entertain him Joyfully, both in his House and Heart. And though it be true that the Churches Testimony be commonly our First, yet 'tis not alwayes our Chief Inducement to believe the Divinity of Holy Writ; it's own Native Prerogatives Heightning that into Faith, which the Churches Authority left but Opinion. To which purpose I Remember a Handsome Observation of some of the Antients; that the *Samaritans* that First Believ'd in Christ upon the Womans Report, when afterwards they were Blessed with an Immediate Conversation with himself, they Exultingly told the Woman, *Now we believe, not because of thy Saying; for we have heard him our selves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World:* for so, Diverse that first Believ'd the Scripture but upon the Churches score; are afterwards by Acquaintedness brought to Believe the Scripture upon its Own score, that is, by the Discovery of those Intrinsic Excellencies and Prerogatives that manifest its Heav'nly Origination. ————— This fa-

John 4.
39 -- 42.

cred

cred Book, ev'n where it hath not Embellishments of Language, doth not Want them: being so much Recommended by its Imperious Perswasiveness Without them, that it is more Ennobl'd by their Needlessness, than it would be, by their Affluence. And if to some Passages of Scripture, we must Apply that of Saint Paul, (whereby yet he thought to Recommend his Ministry to the *Corinthians*) *That his Speech and his Preaching was not with the Enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but* *ἐν ἀποδείξει συνέπειας καὶ συνέκρουσις*, we may also Remember, that he subjoyns as the Reason that mov'd him to use this Plain and Unadorn'd Way of Teaching his *Corinthians*, *That their Faith might not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God.* And truly the Efficacy and Operations of the Bible, in Comparison of those of all other Books, Duly consider'd, we may esteem, that as God oftentimes doth in the Scripture, what in the Scripture he is said to Do, *Draw us with the Cords of a Man*, (Passages Wreath'd with Flowers of Rhetorick)

1 Cor. 2.

1 -- 4.

Verse 5.

rick) so is it not Unfit, that he should sometimes Employ Expressions, that Carrying away our Obedience, our Reverence, and our Assent in spite of our Indispositions to them, might Manifest their Derivation from him, who is not Ty'd to such Means as Men would think Necessary, but can compass his Ends as well By as Without any: Nor can I often Consider the Instances Experience affords us of the Efficacy of many Texts, (which some that Pretend to Eloquence accuse of having None) without sometimes calling to mind, how in the Book of Nature God has Veil'd in an Obscure and Homely Stone an Attractiveness (Unvouchsaf'd to Diamonds and Rubies) which the Stubbornest of Metals do's Obsequiously acknowledge. And as the Load-stone not onely Draws what the sparklingst Jewels can not move, but Draws stronglier, where Arm'd with Iron, than Crown'd with Silver: so the Scripture, not onely is Movinger than the Glitteringst Human Styles, but hath oftentimes a Potenter Influence on Men in those Passages that seem quite

Destitute

Destitute of Ornaments, than in those where Rhetorick is Conspicuous.

I should now, *Theophilus*, immediately Pass on to the other things I am to Discourse to You of, concerning the Scripture, but that the Curiosity wherewith You are wont to take Notice of my Practices, and to make Enquiries after my Private Opinions, makes me Imagine, You telling me, that I do often Read, and do much oftner Commend Books of Devotion, Notwithstanding all the Prerogatives I have Attributed to the Scripture; Wherefore to this I shall Answer, that I Esteem indeed the Truths of Scripture, so Important and Valuable, that I cannot be Troubl'd to see them Presented to us in Variety of Dresses, that we may the more Frequently and the more Attentively take Notice of them. And though some Devout Composures are so Unskilfully Written, as to be much Fitter to Express the Devotion of the Writer, than to Excite it in the Reader, yet there are others so Handsomely, and so Pathetically Pen'd,

T

that

The Conclusion of one Part of the Discourse concerning the Scripture and the Transition to the Next.

that a Good Man can scarce Read them without Growing Better, and 'ev'n a Bad Man must be very Much so, without becomming Less so by Perusing them. Nor do I at all Design to Disparage Books of Devotion, when I Preferr the Scripture to them, that being so Noble and Matchless a Work, that a Book may Attain to a High Degree of Excellence, whilst it Remains Inferiour to the Scripture, of whose Preheminencies I have already on several Occasions Nam'd Divers to You; And therefore shall at present onely Recommend to Your Observation this one Advantage of the Scripture, ev'n as to those things that are also to be met with in other Books of Devotion. That if *the Words of the Wise be* (as Solomon tells us they are) *like Nails fastned by the Masters of the Assemblies*, the self same Nail must enter Less or Deeper according to the Strength of the hand that Drives it in; And Doubtless, any Doctrine Believ'd to come from God, in the same Terms it is Deliver'd to us, is like to be Entertain'd with a Deeper and Obsequiouse Respect,

spect, Concurrently whereunto, the Apostle to set forth the Thessalonians Reception of the Gospel, Sayes, *That they receiv'd it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God.* After which it is no Wonder he could immediately subjoyn, that *It did also effectually work in them that Believed.* And though it be very true that the Forreigness and Obscurity of some Texts will Require as well as the Teeming Richness of others will Bear, their being Alledg'd in Words much more Numerous than those whose Involv'd or Contracted Senses they are to Display, Yet is it also as True, that Men do not unfrequently Mistake themselves in thinking to Deliver the Holy Ghost's Conceptions in Fitter Terms than his Own, the proper Precise Expressions of Scripture being oftentimes so Pathetical and Sinewy, that he that Stretches them, Enervates them, and Paraphrases, though Handsome, do as much Wrong them, as a Mixture of Silver, though no Ignoble Metal, does Wrong an Ingot of Gold. And though some Texts like Pearls Lose indeed of their

Beauty, but Operate, and are Administer'd more Successfully Beaten to Powder, or with other Cordial Ingredients made up into a Confection, yet divers Sacred Expressions do like Diamonds Lose both their Sparkling Lustre, and Engraving Faculty, when ground to Dust, and lose more in their Entireness and Form than can be Recompenc'd by any Addition. And truly, as to my Own particular, no Book of Devotion doth Constantly Affect me so Powerfully as the Bible. And whereas I am of so Nice a Palate, that in my Esteem Composures of that Kind still Lose at the Second Reading, in the Inspired Volume, Familiarity breeds not Contempt but Reverence (and I Like a Book, Acquaintance still Endears.) When I first began Attentively to Read the Scripture, and (according to my Custom when I Read Books, whereof I have a Promising Expectation) to Mark in the Margin the Passages that seem'd to Deserve a Peculiar Notice or Reflection, I mark'd, but here and there some Verses in a Chapter, but when upon a Greater Familiarity with the Idiotisms, the Sense, and

and the Applicableness of Scripture I came to Resurvey it, I then in some places Mark'd the Whole Chapter, and in Most others left much Fewer Texts than before Unfurnish'd with some Mark of Reference. And whereas at my Entrance I took even the Choicest part of the Bible to be at Best but like some *Indian* Province, wherein though Mines and Gems were more Abundant than in Other Countreys, yet they were but Sparingly to be met here and there: after a Competent Stay my Ensuing Perusals Presented it me, if not as a Royal Jewel made up of Gold and Precious Stones, yet (which is Gloriously) like *Aaron's* Breast-plate, a Sacred Jewel, the Particular Instructions for which were given by God himself, and which, besides the Various Number of flaming Gems set in fine Gold, and plac'd in a Mysterious Order, was Ennobl'd by that *Urim* and *Thummin*, wherein God vouchsaf'd to Reveal himself to Mortals, and was Adorn'd with so much cunning Work in Gold, Blue, Purple, Scarlet and fine Twin'd Linnen, that the Contrivance and Workmanship lent

Pſalm 1.
2.

lent a Lustre to the Glittering Materials, without being Obscur'd by them. This Experiment keeps me from Wondering to find in the Inspired Poets Description of the Man he Attributes a Blessedness to, that his *Chaphatz* is in the *Law of the Lord*, and in his *Law will he Meditate day and night*. For the Word other Translations render *Voluntas & Studium*, our's Englishes Delight, an indeed the Hebrew *סוד* will bear both Senses, and seems there Emphatically to signify a Study replenish'd with so much Delight to the Devout and Intelligent Prosecutors of it, that like the *Hallelujahs* of the Blessed 'tis at once a Duty and a Pleasure, an Exercise and a Recompence of Piety. And indeed, if Gods Blessing upon the Devout Christian's Study of that Book do (according to the Psalmists Prayer) *upon his Eyes to discern the נפלאות Niplaot, Hidden Wonders* contain'd in it, He should, in Imitation of him that in the same Psalm sayes of his God, *I rejoyce at thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil*, be as Satisfy'd as Navigators that Discover Unknown Countreys. And I must

Pſal. 119.
8.

Verſ. 162.

must confess, that when sometimes with the Apostles in the Mount, I Contemplate *Moses* and *Elias* Talking with Christ, I mean the Law and Prophets Symphonizing with the Gospel, I cannot but (Resemblingly Transported with a like Motive) Exclaim with *Peter*, *It is good for me to be here*, and cease to think the Psalmist an Hyperbolist, for comparing the Transcendent Sweetness of Gods Word to that Inferiour one) of Honey, which is Like it, in nothing more, than in that, of both their Suavities, Experience gives much Advantageouser Notions than Descriptions can.

Mat. 17.
verſ. 4.

Pſal. 119.
verſ. 103.

But *Theophilus*, upon Condition You will not call this Excursion of Your Own occasioning a Fit of Devotion, I will no longer Detain You on one Subject, but forthwith Proceed to Discourse of those Other things that I am to consider in the Scripture besides the Style For though this be Such as I have been Representing it, yet I hope we shall in our Progress find, that 'twill be far less Fit to Apply to this Matchless Book that of the Heathen Poet,

Materia

Materiam superabat Opus ———

Than that Sacred one of the Psalmist,
where he as well sayes that *the Kings*

Psalm 45.
23.

Daughter is all Glorious within, as that
Her Cloathing is of wrought Gold.

F I N I S.
