

OF THE  
REASONABLENESS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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By H. H. D.D.

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Ἔτοιμοι αἰεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογία πάντι πρὸς αἰτῶντι ὑμᾶς λόγον πρὸς τὴν  
ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδα. 1 Pet. 3, 15.

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*The third Edition.*

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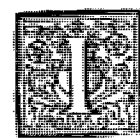
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OF THE  
REASONABLENESS  
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*The Introduction.*



**I** hath always been accounted more Reasonable to doubt of Principles first, and then to throw off the Deductions that naturally arise from them, when to contest the Conclusions, when the Principles or Premises are granted. This occasioned that saying of *Picus Mirandula*, That the Speculative Atheist was the greatest prodigy, but one, and that was the Practical Atheist. To acknowledg Christian Religion to be true, and consequently that without sincere obedience to all Christs Precepts, not onely the infinite rewards of the Gospel are forfeited, but the infinite torments become our portion; and yet to live lives of profaneness, and luxury, and indulgence to every liberty, that suites with our humors, without fear, or discomfeiture of minde, is a shortness of discourse, that no man that hath consideration enough to examine, or judgement to compare, can choose but discern and condemne in himself. As therefore the \* *Epicurean* that was resolved not to be repressd, or live in the awe of Religion, and Priests, counted it but necessary to disbelieve the perpetuity of torments beyond this life, so hath it

*Self. 1.*

\*...have simulation  
tum suum esse  
putarent  
Erumination  
homines nulla  
ratione calen-  
rent,  
Religionibus  
atq; mischib-  
figur. ration.  
L. acced. i.

been Satans method (and the advantage which he hath taken of these times, from the commonness of casting down *mounds* and *redges*, of *disputing*, and questioning the most established Truths) to offer it to the Reason and Judgment of his Clients, Whether it be not more easie and hopeful to break up the *foundation* it self, then, while that remains in its firmness, to demolish that which is *erected* upon it, and by entangling men in those *practices*, which render them incapable of receiving *benefit* by *Christianity*, to oblige them to endeavour to cast off the *doctrines*, and to rid themselves from the ill consequences of it. Thus have some men taught themselves the *skill*, and dexterity of *unravelling principles*, and by giving themselves *liberty* to *disobey Christ* in some *pleasant*, or *gainful* particulars, have at last in their own defence (that they may *salve* their *phenomena*, and appear *congruous* to themselves) arrived calmly to the *scorners chair*, the casting off *Christianity* it self.

*Seet. 2.* In stead of gainless complaints, I shall therefore hasten to give some check to this growing evil, and reduce the whole matter of debate to these two heads.

*Seet. 3.* First, I shall consider the *Grounds of Christianity* in the *gross*, or *bulk*, all of it together, and in some measure, justify the *reasonableness* of them; and then secondly, I shall descend in the *retail*, to the survey and vindication of those *particular branches* of *Christianity*, which appear to men at this time to be least supported with *Reason*.

## CHAP. I.

*The Grounds of Christianity, or the Reasons upon which men embrace Christian Religion in the gross, all of it together.*

*Seet. 1.* **I**N lieu of the *many grounds* (or several branches, and improvements of the same one complicated ground) which other men have very rationally enlarged on, This present discourse (which desires not to expatiate, nor to suppose the Reader to have renounced

*H. Grotius, and Phil. Morney du Fleisse, &c.*

ced his *Christianity* wholly) shall confine it self to these two heads: First, the *Testimony* on which *Christianity* is built: Secondly, The *advantages* that those, which embrace it, shall reap by it. The first will render the belief *rational*, and conclude it *impious* to doubt of it. The second will render the belief *gainful*, and conclude it most *uncharitable* to our selves, yea, and *unwise*, and *treacherous* not to adhere to it. The first will pronounce it, with the *Apostle*, a *faithful saying*; the second, *worthy of all acceptance*. The first will reconcile it to our *brains*, the second to our *hearts*: The first will give it possession of our *understandings*; the second will ravish our *minds* with the beauty and luster of it.

The *Testimony* on which we believe *Christianity*, i. e. on which *Seet. 2.* we believe that *Christ* was sent from *God*, to *reveal* his *Fathers* will unto us, and to be *believed* in all that he delivered to the World, (which, when it is *believed*, it necessarily follows, that all and every part of *Christian Religion* is infallibly true, and capable of no farther doubting) is the most important, and *convincing* of belief, or faith, which can be imagined.

For if the *Apostle* had not said it, it is yet in it self most evident to common sense, That *Faith* consisteth in *believing*, i. e. that *Seet. 3.* I cannot believe any thing to be true on any better, nay on any other ground, but onely that I hear it thus affirmed: And as the affirmation is, such is the belief: If the affirmation be from a fallible person, from a meer man, the belief must be a fallible belief; but if the person affirming be infallible, there is the belief infallible also.

That infallible affirmer is but one, viz. *God*, of whose nature *Seet. 4.* it is, to be *veracious*, to be able to do any thing, but to lie, which was also affirmed by *Christ* out of the *Principles* of common nature. Let *God* be true, and every man a liar, i. e. though no infallibility of testimony can be attributed to any meer man, yet whatsoever is testified by *God*, doth certainly deserve to be fully credited.

And therefore if *God* shall testify the truth of any thing, *Seet. 5.* there can be no farther scruple or possibility of doubting, or suspecting the truth of what is so testified, then there is *actual doubt*, whether the *God* of Heaven be *God*, or whether the *God* of truth,

Set. 6.

α πῖ-ιν τας  
 οὐν πατίν,  
 Αἰς 17.31.

Now this *affirmation* or *refification* of *God*, that *Christ* was  
 sent from him, to declare his will to us. &c. (upon which being  
 once supposed, the truth of all *Christian Religion* truly so called,  
 is immediately and infallibly founded) hath more then one way  
 been authentically interposed. Such are the many repeated  
*testimonies* of the *Prophets* in the *Old Testament* (which finding a  
 perfect completion in *Christ*, and none but *Christ*, do amount to a  
 divine testimony,) Such was the coming of the *Angel* to *Mary* the  
*Mother of Christ*, and to *Elizabeth* the *Mother of John Baptist*,  
 in the *New Testament*; as also the *Star* which lighted the *wife*  
 of the *men* of the *East* unto him, (and of which the \* *Hea-*  
*mens* themselves have affirmed, not only that it was  
 an especial *Star*, that never before appeared in the  
*Heaven*, but also that it had a portentous significance,  
 pointing at the descent of a venerable God, for the sal-  
 vation of men, and the good of Mortals) So again that  
 of the *Miracles* wrought by *Christ* and his *Apostles*,  
 which are another kinde of *Gods* speaking to us in  
 men, and upon *Earth* (particularly that of raising  
 the dead) and are by the *Apostles* styled, what in  
 reason they are, *demonstrations*, *Acts* 2.22. and *refi-*  
*fications* of *God* himselfe, *Heb.* 2.4. But above all  
 his own *Resurrection* out of the *Grave*, after he had  
 been Crucified by them. *God* by thus raising him  
 is said (most truly according to the dictates of reason)  
 to have a given to all men Faith, i.e. an argument of full  
 conviction, that he was what he pretended to be, and so

So again a second time, in the presence of three sober men (which was the number, by which the weightiest matters were authentically testified) Peter, and James, and John, being all with him in a mountain, Behold, a light<sup>er</sup> cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: Hear him. Giving an unquestioned authority to all, that should ever come from him after.

I Pet. I. 21.  
h. b. d. g. f. g.  
C. h. d. g. f. g.  
C. h. d. g. f. g.  
C. h. d. g. f. g.  
Rom. i. 9.

Seif. -

نہایت

Scet. 9.

Thirdly, At a time, not long before his death, when he was a praying to his Father, to glorify his Name. *A voice came from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. And of them that stood by, some said that it thundered, others, that it was an Angel that spake to him: From both which, it is easily concluded, That God, whether by, or without the Ministry of an Angel, was heard to speak to him out of the Thunder.*

Scet. 10.

What was thus done personally to Christ, was with some small variation promised, (and so by John Baptist first foretold) that it should be performed (after his departure) to his Apostles, or Disciples, who were to preach his Doctrine, and what they knew of him, after his going out of this world; and accordingly, in the very manner which was fore-told, it came to pass. as all other things foretold by him, did punctually follow. For as they were all together; there was suddenly a noise from Heaven, as of a violent wind, and filled the whole house where they sat. And so this (style) d the baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, i. e. Receiving them with a far higher Ceremony than that of Baptism, viz. with a shining glorious descent of the Spirit of God upon them) did at once give them their Commission from Heaven, and was a testimony of God himself, That what they should teach from Christ, was the very doctrine, which God required to be embraced by the World.

Scet. 11.

And of this sort there was yet farther one most eminent passage. A known and eminent Jew, one Saul, who by his Scet (a Pharisee) and by his extraordinary warmth, and zeal to the Jewish Law, in opposition to Christianity, had interested himself profectly in the persecuting of it, had a principall hand in the putting St. Stephen to death (as appears by the witnesses, laying their garments at his feet. Acts 7. 58.) and was engaged in a most vehement, bloody designe against the Christians in Damascus, and having gotten Letters of Commission from the High Priest to that purpose, Acts 9. 1. was now very *ragel* upon his way thither; This man thus breathing out threatenings, and slaughters against the Church, and as he was close to Damascus, his journeys end, on a sudden a light from Heaven shone about him, like lightning flashing about his ears; and falling to the ground, by that means he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

me? In words so convincingly delivered, that he knew assuredly, that it was God, that by an Angel thus appeared, and spake to him; and thereupon he gave answer immediately, *Who art thou Lord?* The voice replied, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,* with the addition of other words, which struck him into such a horror, that immediately trembling, and in agony of Passion, He said, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* And was again answered, what he should do, *Go unto the City,* and there he should receive particular Directions. Which accordingly happened. and this person became immediately a prime Apostle, or Preacher of Christianity. This thing was not done privately, but every circumstance of the story was publickly known at that time; his Letters from the High Priest were known to the Sanhedrim; and before he came to Damascus, the news of them was come thither, so far, that Ananias a Christian there, that in a vision from God was bid to go to him in such a house, made this objection against obeying the command, That this was the man, that had done so much mischief, and was now come with such a Commission to apprehend all that profess the worship of Christ in that place. And besides, there was company with him on the way, when the prodigy befel him, and all they heard the voice, and saw no body, Vers. 7. 'Tis true indeed, that in one relation of that passage, Acts 22. 9. it is said, That they heard not the voice. But that (as all other seeming contradictions of the Scripture) is easily solved by observing, that the word *voice* in Hebrew, which signifies a voice, signifies thunder also, as *Herm. 12. 19. Whose voice, i. e. Thunder speaketh the earth,* and so very often. And so where it is said, That they heard the voice, the sense is, That they heard the thunder, which was joyned with the lightning that flash about him; and when it is said, They heard not the voice, it is exprest in the place, what is meant by it, They heard not the voice of him that spake to him, i. e. The voice of Christ immediately appearing from Heaven, and calling unto him. Saul, Saul, &c. but onely saw the lightning, and heard the thunder: but what was said to him, he onely heard that was concerned in it, but by the effects, his answers, and consequent change, they easily discerned that also, though they heard it not. This story did this man alwaies avow as a notorious Truth, whensoever he

was called in question by *Jews* or *Romans*, for Preaching *Christ*; and there was never any question made of the truth of it: And this went for his *Commission* to be an *Apostle of Christ*; and he never sought for any other: And after doing more service in the *Church*, then all the rest of *Christ's* own (regularly chosen, and designed) *Apostles*, he at last laid down his life for the testimony of that *Truth*, which before this he had so sharply persecuted.

Self. 12.

This is not all yet; for at the beginning of the diffusion of the *Gospel* to the Gentile World, and for the declaring of *God's* Will in that particular, there was not onely a vision to *Cornelius*, and an extasie, and an audible voyce from Heaven to *Saint Peter*, in these words, *Arise Peter, kill and eat*, (the obscurity of which words, and of the representation, to which they belonged, was presently interpreted by the effect.) But beyond both these, it follows, That at the Preaching of *Peter* to *Cornelius*, and the rest of his company of *Gentile believers*, the *Holy Ghost* fell on all that heard the Word, i. e. probably came down upon them in some way of visible appearance, (the like a as before had befallen the *Apostles*,) or if not so, yet in such manner, as evidenced it self by giving them power of speaking strange languages, and other gifts, and graces, fitting them for several conditions in the *Church*: And this was seen by the *Jews*, that were very far from being inclinable to believe such a thing of *Gentiles*, and being convinced by the evidence, b were astonished at it, rapt with admiration at the strangeness, but no way doubting the truth of it: And it so fell out, that *Peter* afterwards being called in question by other *Jews*, for what he had then done in Preaching to *Gentiles*, (which they thought utterly unlawful) by this relation of the descent of the *Holy Ghost* upon those *Gentiles*, c he satisfied them; which sure he could not have done, if there had remained any doubt of the truth of it. And the same fell out again to the *Ephesian Disciples*, and the truth that it did so, was evidenced, by their speaking all strange languages (which they had never learned) and prophesying. Two gifts, which were so constant consequents of that coming of the *Holy Ghost* on any, that they testified it convincingly to those, that had no evidence of the fact.

The

The propriety of this descent to this turn, and to that other Self. 13. grand one of giving *Commissions* (and authorizing, and so testifying the truth of all that should be taught by them, on whom the Spirit thus descended) may perhaps be better understood, by remembering the customs appointed by *God* among the *Jews*. Those that were, among them, called to be *Prophets* out of their *Schools*, were assumed, and consecrated to it by anointing, (a ceremony of advancing to some eminent office; and therefore the *Chaldee Paraphrase* for unction, reads ordinarily *דבא* advancement.) Now for many years, before this coming of *Christ*, Prophecy had failed among the *Jews*: Under the second Temple, say they, there was no Oyl, nor any way of Revelation, save only that of the voice from Heaven. Now therefore when *God* was thus pleased to send His Son, to reveal his compleat Will unto the World, and from him to continue the same, by his *Apostles*, and others after him; instead of that solemn Ceremony of Uction, is this visible descent of the *Holy Ghost* on him, and on them, in a shining fiery cloud, and with it these words of consecration to *Christ*, *This is my Beloved Son*, &c. and in lieu of that voice, the gift of Tongues, to the *Apostles*, and others. This was foretold by one of the *Jewish Prophets* long before, That the Lord should anoint him to Preach, and that the Spirit of the Lord should be upon him, i. e. that he should be anointed, i. e. ordained to this office of Preaching *God's* Will, not by material oyl, but spiritual unction, by the real descent of the Spirit of *God* upon him. And accordingly one of his Disciples, *Saint John*, being to confute a sort of Antichristian Hereticks of his time, which denied *Christ* to be come really in the flesh, useth no other Argument (to fortifie them, to whom he writes) but onely the mention of this Testimony from Heaven, this descent on *Christ* and the *Apostles*, and others, who had instructed them in Christianity; which he vails under the title of the Uction, viz. that unction vulgarly known among them by that name; the unction from the holy One, as he calls it, i. e. from *God* in Heaven, by which (as by their Teachers it had been communicated to them

B 2

them

a Acts 10. 44.  
See Acts 15. 8.  
& 11. 15. & 17.

b Vesp. 45.

c Acts 11. 15.  
& 18  
Acts 19. 6.

a Gradus Revelationis Divinae  
quatuor, Nefus prophetia per visionem,  
& Spectra. Ruch Hicadole,  
afflatus Spiritus Sancti, qui erat sine  
istis, ut in David. &c. Item &  
Tummin in peccatis iudicii spiritus de-  
ficientia peccatoris, seu Hefeben pre-  
nuntians Judam victoriam, quod  
cessavit splendescere. An. 300. in-  
sequam ego scriberem, inquit Jo-  
sephus, cum Deus traiceretur ob-  
transgressiones Legum, vid. Suid.  
in voce Eppod. & Bala. Ch. 2.  
vox calitatis aulit, & haec omnia  
sub templo secuntur, &c. vid. E. E. ap-  
um in Targum Penu. Exod.

them) they *knew all things* (i.e. were sure that the Doctrine they had been taught, was true) and *needed not to be taught by any*, i.e. wanted no more *Arguments* to confirm this truth unto them: That *unction*, as he farther adds, *teaching them of all*, i.e. giving them sufficient *instructions* in that matter, and in all other such *fundamental truths* of the *Christian Doctrine*, testified to them by those who had been thus *anointed* immediately from *Heaven*, authorised to teach them Truth: This same again, as far as concerned *Christ*, is by another a *Evangelical* writer joyned with his *working of Miracles*, and called *Gods anointing him with the Holy Ghost, and with power*, (as in b another place *Gods anointing him, alone*) which is directly the same with that other phrase used by *Saint Paul*, the *demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*, the *descent of the Spirit, and Working of Miracles*: The two things, which he urged to the *Jews* or *Heathens*, whosoever he preached, (as things, which he was sure, they could no more contradict, then *demonstrations* themselves, there being so many then alive, that could witness the truth of them.) In which respect, he after tells them, of *Gods* having *confirmed them into Christ*, and *anointed and sealed them*, all in the same sense; to signify *Gods* having afforded them these convincing *testimonies* of the truth of *Christianity*, preached to them by those, on whom the *Holy Ghost* had descended and who wrought *Miracles* among them.

Sec. 14. That this was a very *competent* confirmation of the Doctrine of *Christ*, may yet farther appear by considering, first the *persons* to whom this was to be done, the then *Church of God*, the *people of the Jews*, which were acquainted with his *voices*, and his *Prophecies*, and his *Oeconomies* formerly among them: Secondly, the matter that was thus to be confirmed, no greater *change*, then to which this way of attestation may in reason be deemed abundantly *proportionable*. For the things to be *believed*, onely the real completion of some things, which had been before *foretold*, and the revealing some *truths*, which had been more *obscurely* represented in the *Old Testament*; and then those, how *high* and *mysterious* soever, yet being clearly revealed by *Christ*, and the *Apostles* in the *New*, and the explicit belief of them, no further required of any, then in *proportion* to the degree of the *revelation* of them, the *revealing* of them must be looked on, as the *satisfy-  
ing*

ing of an appetite, a desire of more *knowledge* (which is *naturally* in all men, and is *sharpened* by the having received some *imperfect* rays of it) and consequently should not in *reason* be expected to be attested with such a *pomp of signes*, and *prodigies*, as *impositions of tasks*, and *exactions of obediences* are wont to be. Then for the things to be done in *Christianity*, the *duties* and *observances*; It is again considerable, that the *change* in that respect was not such, as would *denominate* it a *new Religion*, but onely the *reforming* and *perfecting* that which was before received among the *Jews*, and the making it more *tolerable* and *easy* to be received by other parts of the (*Gentile*) World. The *worship* of the *one true God*, *Creator of Heaven and Earth*, (contrary to the *false worships* of the many gods and idols of the *Heathens*, and to all the *unnatural lusts* attending them) had been sufficiently testified to the *Nation of the Jews*, by many *voices* from *Heaven*, and undeniable attestations of *God* himself (and indeed to other *Nations* by the *fearful*, *miraculous* judgments, shewn in *Egypt*, and on the *Canaanites*, under the conduct of *Moses*, and *Joshuah*, &c.) and by *Gods* continual *residing* among that people, and his *attesting* that by the *Urim* and *Thummim*, by the several *Prophets* sent by him, and the other ways of *revelations*. And to those that granted all this, it was foretold (so often that no *Jew* doubted of it) that there should come days of *Reformation*, that there should come a *Messias*. This was long ago *promised* through all passages of their story; to *Adam* under the title of the *Seed of the woman*; to *Sem*, that *God* should dwell or pitch his *tabernacle* in the *Tents of Sem*, take *flesh* upon him in his family; to *Abraham*, and *Judah*, to *David*, and all along through the writings of their *Prophets*: Concerning this *Messias*, their *carnal* hearts had pre-conceived some *mistakes*, as that he shou'd be a *glorious King* here, and make them again, (after their being *subdued* by the *Romans*) a most *villorous*, *glorious* people on *Earth*, and this, howsoever they demean'd themselves, onely by the *priviledg* of having *Abraham* (to whom great *promises* were made) to their *father*. At last this *Messias* (otherwise described by their *Prophets*, as one that should come in a *mean* and *lowly* manner, no way *desireable* to the eye of the world, *Isa. 53.*) comes just as he had been *foretold*, a *forerunner* being sent before him, on purpose to prepare  
his

his way, to dispossess them of their fond persuasions of their absolute election (by having Abraham to their father) and pointing him out particularly as the Son of God, the Messiah that was now to be received (as he had been so greedily, and so long expected) by them. This forerunner, that thus foretold, and after pointed him out, was (as they, that crucified Christ, confess) by all the \* Jews taken for a Prophet. And moreover to this testimony of this acknowledged Prophet, comes in the addition of the miraculous descent of the holy Spirit, and the voice from Heaven, and all that hath been mentioned consequent to that. And to those, among whom this had always been acknowledged an authentick way of attesting Gods will, nothing could be more required but this; Christ then (or God himself in humane nature, assumed of a virgin, and born after a supernatural manner) when he came to thirty years old (the age of a Doctor among that people) sets to this business, which it was foretold he should perform, tells them how the former law was to be reformed, (and especially their former lives, from external observances to internal purities) and how to be filled up, and perfected in some particulars; and then lightly changes some ceremonies customary among them, and accommodates them to present use, removes the wall of division, which had been between them, and all the rest of the world, shews them, that that was meant onely to keep them from imitating the Heathens sins, and now that there was more need that Heathens, and they should love one another, and joyn to reform both their lives, and practice Christian virtues, then keep that supercilious distance from one another; and in a word, he brings the whole matter to such a model, as all other men, but the Jews, like extremely better, then that which was before among them, and consequently, come in, in shoals, at the preaching of it: And the Jews, that do not so, acknowledge the onely reason why they do not, to be their zeal to their law of outward performances, and the persuasion of their absolute election, that is, in effect, that they had no other quarrel to him, but onely that he did not teach the doctrines that they liked, and were before imbued with, which if he had, he had by that very means done contrary to the prophecies by them allowed of, which foretold he should work a reformation.

Upon

Upon these unreasonable terms, they crucified him: And by their doing so, more wonderful attestations yet are given to all this. In his very death the Sun is miraculously eclipsed, at a time of the Moon, when by nature it was absolutely impossible, and so far against all rules of Astronomy, that learned men in other places took notice of it to be a violence done to nature, which must signify some great matter. Then a prodigy befalls the Temple, and that a very significant one. Then the bodies of many dead men arise and go to Jerusalem, and are seen by many. But above all, he himself riseth from the dead, and Angels again are sent to give notice of it: And those that at his death had feared themselves deluded (as adversity is a great temptation, and by Christ himself, foretold to be so) are every one of them confirmed by seeing, touching, talking with him: And what is seen, and testified by them, was seen also by five hundred persons at once, which lived many years to attest the truth to all that doubted it; And at length (which was the most immediate reification of the truth of all the former) he is bodily and visibly taken up into Heaven, before their eyes.

When that was done, there was but one imaginable method *Señ. 15.* behinde, that, according as he had promised, while he was upon Earth, he should, being himself departed, send the Paraclete, which by descending visibly upon the Apostles, and by enduing them with the gift of doing Miracles, and of speaking of all Languages, which they were known never to have learnt, should enable them to convince the World, by the testimony of Christs Resurrection, and Ascension, and destroying of Satan by his death (the most improbable means of working victories) that he was the Messiah foretold, that Seed of the Woman, that should break the Serpents head. On strength of this, they which so lately doubted, now cheerfully lay down their lives, in testifying of all these truths: And those Jews that did not yet believe on him, were according to his distinct predictions, many times repeated, (they, their Temple, in which they trusted, their City, their whole Nation, and infinite multitudes of them, wherefoever they were found) most stupendiously destroyed by the Roman Eagles or Legions. All this (thus hastily put together, so as necessarily to omit many weighty circumstances under every head) is sure

prodigy



Scd. 16.

This first ground of believing *Christianity* being thus mentioned, is not capable of any dispute from any reasonable man, unless from him which shall question, whether this be not *fabulous* in the relation, i. e. whether fact there were ever indeed heard such voices, or secondly, whether they were not *delusions* of the *heavens*, or at least the voice of some other, and not of God. And to him that shall make the former scruple, I shall be able to give as satisfactory an answer, as is possible to be given, of a matter of *this nature*, of any the lightest or weightiest consequence : To a matter of *this nature*, I say, i. e. of a *matter of fact*, (for such it must needs be, that such a voice was heard from *Heaven*) and that *fact* past so many hundred years ago : For first, that *fact* was of necessity to be confined to some *determinate time and place*, to be done somewhere, and why not in *Judea*, where it is said to be done : to be seen by some *particular men*, and by them of necessity (if it were to be known) to be *attested* to others ; nay, if it had been done so as to be heard, and seen by the *whole World* then living, ( though that this should point out that one person *Jesus*, would not be well reconcilable with that, because his *body* could not be in *every place* ) yet could not the next Age come to *know* this, but must be forced to make use of the *attestation* of men of that Age to reveal it to them, and so proceed by the very way that now is allowed us, that of *faith or believing*. For secondly, should there at this hour come the *like voice from Heaven*, in the hearing of any the most creditable honest men of this Age, what way would be expected to convince the Ages to come : ( who should not be present to hear it ) of the truth of this, but by the *constant affirmation* of those, who are now *ear-witnesses* of it, and by their committing all this to writing now, so that all that should now live, and *suspect*, or believe it a forgery, might be able to examine and discover the truth of it ; especially, if to that they should joyn the doing of the greatest *Miracles*, which coming onely from

Beyond such *testimony of eye*, or *ear-witnesses* thus publicly *Sett.* 17.  
and authoritatively protested, and conveyed to posterity, there  
is no *rational* evidence imaginable, for those that lived not in  
that age; nor do men at any time exact or require any more  
*authentick* proof of matters of *fact*, or ground of *believing* any  
thing. For as to the *voice of God* again from *Heaven*, (which  
alone can pretend to be above this) this is not at all commodious  
to this turn; for this were for *God* to multiply prodigies, *improp-*  
*erly* and *unseasonably*, 'tis sure *unnecessarily*, and to all that  
were not *present*, this would be again as *questionable* as the  
former.

For the testifying an high important truth, which cannot otherwise be known, God hath been pleased thus *personally* to interpose his own *power*, and *authority*, and to speak from *Heaven*, yea, and to repeat that again and again, that there may no matter of doubt remain concerning it: But when that hath been thus done by *God sufficiently*, then are there sufficient *humane* means to convey the *truth or history* of this fact to other men, *viz.* the *testimony* of those, that saw or heard it. And as it were ridiculous to suppose, or expect from *God*, that he should *testifie* from *Heaven*, that such men did hear that former voice from *Heaven*, so the same *Law of God*, and *Nature*, which forbids *lying*, as *sinful*, forbids also *incredibility*, as *irrational*, when a thing is by *unsuspected* witnesses, upon *certain knowledge*, with so many *improvements* and *advantages*, thus *sufficiently testified*: And if God upon mans several *incredulities*, should be still obliged to give *witness* to his truths by his own *voice*, then should he cut off that *rule for belief*, which in all other things (agreeably to the *dictates of reasonable nature*) he hath made standing among men. And in this case to require any higher *testimony*, were the same inconvenient absurdity, as not to *believe* any thing upon any other ground, then that of *sight* (which is indeed to mistake *knowledge* for *belief*, or evidence for *adherence*, and must necessarily leave nothing of *virtue* rewardable in that *Faith*, which is so *violently* and *unavoidably* produced) or to expect a *voice from Heaven* to give me daily assurance of all the passages, or *relations of history*,

and not to believe that there was such a man as *Alexander*, or *Cesar*, or *William the Conqueror*, or *Elizabeth* the late (but before our birth) *Queen* of this *Kingdom*, unless some voice of God from *Heaven* attest it to me.

Sect. 19.

They that cannot believe at any cheaper rate, then of a new *minutely prodigy* from *Heaven*, for every act of believing a *prodigy* from *Heaven*, or (more plainly) they that will not believe any thing, but what they know, must be fed also as well as taught by *miracle*, or else must be obliged to *abstinence* (greater then any man inflicts upon himself) by continuing constant to that *principle*. For no man hath *demonstration*, or *infallibility*, or *evidence*, for his *safety* in any bit of meat, that he eats, or the *firminess* of any floor he stands on; it being always possible, that what doth moit *sourish*, and *sustain*, might by some *poisonous* mixture, smite and destroy; that the roof that covers, and protects, might *minutely overwhelm* and *bury* us; yet are we not such *Hypochondriack*: in these matters of daily use, (and in them that are, it is interpreted an *eminent defect*, or decay of *reason*, and not an higher pitch of it) as to deprive our selves of the benefit of food and *rayment*, upon consideration of these remote possible dangers, nor to fear all things but what we know *infallibly*.

Sect. 20.

And if it shall be said that eating is necessary for the *preservation* of life, and that that *consideration* makes it reasonable to trust on those grounds, because by *distrusting*, we should subject our selves to a *certainty* of that, whereof the other is at most but an *hazard*; I answer, First, that this instance was produced onely to shew, that we think it *reasonable*, without fear, or doubt, to rely on some things, for which we have no *demonstration*, or *knowledge* of the *impossibility* of the contrary, and that is still proved by this instance, though it be granted, that eating is necessary; because if the necessity of eating were the cause that made men venture that *hazard*, they should never venture it, till they were necessarily to *starve* without it; and when they did so, they should do it with continual *doubt*, and fear of the possible danger; neither of which are thought *rational*, nor practised by *considering* men. And secondly, the interpretation of [being fed] in the instance, was [the whole course of men in feeding] which is not the proportioning of food to the necessities of life, or the *Lessian*

or

or *Cornarian diet*, but the free manner of feeding among men, such as was parallel'd to the standing on a floor, that might possibly fall, that is, being in an upper room; which being not at all necessary to life, and withall possible in nature that it shall minutely be our death, is yet made use of among all *Wise men*, with as much confidence, and *fearlessness*, as it is expected of us, that we should believe the Gospel.

This may be enlarged to the severall businesses of the World, wherein all men act most confidently; to that of *Trafficking*, and *Trading*, and all kinds of *Merchandizing*, which are really mixt with not improbable hazards; the whole life of the husbandman, is a continual example of those, that think fit to adhere, and believe, and act accordingly, without having received any *demonstration*. And none of all these are ever counted *irrational*, even by those who have fixed no thoughts beyond this life, and the thriving, and prospering in it, and who consequently are to lose their chief, and onely good, if it should miscarry, and who in all things of that nature are generally as *rational*, and *wary*, and hard to believe without securities, as the wisest men in the World.

And if we will in the business in hand (the believing of the Apostles relations concerning those Testimonies given Christ from Heaven, wherein we have infinitely stronger grounds, to build our Faith on, securities, and convictions incomparably more pregnant and vehement) allow it reasonable for us to do that once, which in all other things we do confidently every minute of our lives, viz. believe, what we have all reason to believe, without exacting of evidence or demonstration, there will be no more required of us in this matter.

That this is directly the case in hand, and over and above this, that the testifying of the Gospel hath all imaginable advantages, will appear by a bare application of the particulars.

The voices from Heaven concerning Christ, are testified by the joynt concurrence of all that were present at them, no one finding any cause of scruple, or interposing any doubt concerning them. Those very persons with the addition of many more, are allowed the favor of seeing him after his Resurrection, of using all the most infallible means of securing themselves and others

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of the *reality* of this. Being thus assured, they make it the business of their whole *lives* after to *communicate* it to others, some in *writings*, all in *preaching* through all parts of the World, (whither they travelled on purpose to *propagate* this *truth*) agreeing in the whole matter of *story*, and in every circumstance of it. The *truth* of what they say, they again back with *Miracles* on one side, with *completion of predictions*, both of the *Prophets* of old concerning *Christ*, and of *Christ*, concerning *them*, and the *succeeding Ages*, (especially that concerning his *speedy coming* in vengeance against his *crucifiers*) on the other side: Both, *Testimonies* of God, to authorize their *testimonies*. In propagating this doctrine, as they use not *strength*, or *force*, which hath been the engine by which all other Religions have received their growth, so they never endeavour to *disturb States* or *Governments*, for (or by) the planting this *Doctrine*, but always *Preach subjection* to the *powers*, which are any where established, and without all *resistance*, Profess (and by their *actions* demonstrate) themselves obliged to *suffer*, whatsoever their *lawful Magistrates* inflict on them, and contend only with their *prayers* to God, that they may *live quietly and peaceably under them*, having still their *cross* in their *hands*, and many times on their *shoulders*, to follow *Christ*. And if this were not sufficient to *prevent*, or to *satisfy* the jealousies of *Heathen Princes*, yet, upon that very account, it is the greater *testimony* of the truth of their *Doctrine*, when they that propagate it, are so far from designing any *temporal* advantages to themselves, which might bribe them to the *deposing an untruth*, that they actually part with their very *lives*; and consequently with all *capacity* of those *possible* advantages, and acquire nothing but *reproches*, and *torments* and *death* it self; and all this without any other imaginable *reward*, or *payment*, in *commutation*, or *reparation* for all this, save only the *future expectation* of that, for which they yet had no farther *assurance*, then the *truth* of that, which they thus confess; nay yet farther, when they have given this *costly testimony* to this truth, God again bears *testimony* to them, and by *Miracles* wrought at their *Monuments*, being dead, they yet *speak*.

Sect. 24.

That all this is thus true, is again it self testified, not only by *records* still extant under their *hands*, who wrote the *Gospels*, and

and the *Acts*, and by *footsteps* and *remainders* of all others *preaching*, wheresoever they taught, but also by the like consent of the *whole Church*, i. e. whole *multitudes* of that age, wherein this is pretended to be written and taught, who being *convinced* with the *truth* of what we now enquire after, readily gave up their names to the *belief* of it, and to the consequent *confession* of *Christ*, though the doing it, did in like manner cost them very dear, the parting with their *espoused customs* of *livings*, whether among the *Jewish*, or *Gentile* world, their *pleasures*, their worldly *wealth*, and oft-times their *lives* also.

Beyond all this, the success which attended it, had so much of *strangeness* in it (*viz.* that from such mean and *simple beginnings* and *instruments*, without any kind of *power*, or earthly *authority* to back it, without one *sword* ever drawn in defence of it, *Christianity* should soon obtain such a *victory* over the heart of men, in so great a part of the world) that nothing but *truth*, which hath that *over-ruling* force in it, can be deemed to have been its *Champion*. Sect. 26.

Lastly, that these are the *writings*, those the *tradition* of those *eye-witnesses*, whose they pretend to be, and that they were by such *sholes*, such *multitudes* of men of all *Nations* believed then, and that belief signed by the *blood* of many, by the *hazards* and *adventures* of most, by the profest *non-resistance* of all, this is as fully testified to us, as any matter of *fact* can be supposed to be, by the concurrent *testimonies* of all of that age, which say any thing of it, and by a *generall successive* attestation of all intervening ages, since that time, (the authority of \* those writings being never contested by any) i. e. by the same means of *probation*, upon which we believe those things, which we least doubt of, and against which men cannot feigne any *sound*, or shew of *proof*, save only that *testimonies* are not *demonstrations*; which exception will in like manner be in a like or far greater force against all other things, which we believe most confidently.

Sect. 27.

\* Among the *βυζαντινὰ* the *consent* writings of *Scriptures*, attested by all, and not *ἀντιλεγόμενα* contradicted by any, *τακτικόν* *ἐκ πρώτης*

τὴν ἀγίαν καὶ ἀσκήσιον τετρακίδον, οὗς ἐπεταὶ ἡ καὶ περὶ τὴν ἁπλοῦσαν γράσιν. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 32. The four Gospels are first to be placed, and then the story of the Acts of the Apostles.

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Sect. 28.

I am not willing to leave any possible *scruple* unsatisfied in this matter, and therefore I shall proceed to that other *bolder objection* still behind, That that which is pretended to be the *voice of God*, may not have been such, but some *delusion* of the hearers, of *God*, may not have been such, and not of *God*, as the *devil* in the *oracle* delivered himself by *voice*; and therefore though it be confessed, that if this *voice* were *God's*, it is infallibly *credible*, yet there will need some certain way of *discrimination*, to assure it was his. To this I answer, That the person whose *objection* this may be supposed to be, is either a bare *Theist*, that acknowledges a *God*, but not the *God of Israel*; or else he that acknowledges what the *Jew* did, the truth of the *Old Testament*. I shall reply somewhat to each of these.

Sect. 29.

To the *former*, That if this way of *objecting* would be of force, there could be no way for *God* to reveal himself to man, *Veracity* would be an *empty attribute* of *God*, of no signification to us; For it is not imaginable that there should any greater assurance of *God's* speaking to men, then by the *Heavens opening*, and from thence the *Spirit of God* descending visibly, and lighting on one, and out of the *clouds* a voice delivered; whatsoever else can be imagined or named will not be above this. And if all the ways that *God* can use, be not able to give assurance, And if all the ways that *God* can use, be not able to give assurance, that it is *God* that speaks, what are we the neer for knowing that *God* cannot lie, as long as there is supposed for us no way to know, what at any time he saith? nay, to what use (as to this particular) is his *omnipotence*, if he cannot reveal himself to us in such a way, that may be reasonable for us to believe to be his, and not some *deceivers voice*? Nay, in this, *God* shall not be able to do so much, as any *ordinary man*; for he can so reveal himself, or speak, as no man that is *present*, and doth not stop his ears, shall be able to doubt of his speaking.

Sect. 30.

To the *second sort of objectors*, I answer, That the *objection* will lose all its seeming force, if it be remembered; that although now among us, *voices from Heaven*, are not heard, and (therefore we are not at this distance so competent judges of the clearness or certainty, that such, when they were, were not delusions, and accordingly the assent required of us of this age, is but proportionable to the grounds of belief, which we enjoy) yet among that

people of the *Jewes*, this was very ordinary. *Gods Law* was given to *Moses* in that manner, and *God* lead that people by a pillar of cloud, and fire, which was answerable to this: And in after times under the *second Temple*, they confess this the *only way of Gods revealing himself* to them. And therefore in this very matter it was allowed, and pleaded by some *prime men* of that people, that if the *Spirit*, or an *Angel* had spoken to *Paul*, the resisting him would be a fighting against *God*: And thereupon, *Acts* 23. 9. they confessed, that they found no harm in him; that *God* had thus spoken to him, those men then thought probable, but did not avow the knowing it certainly, having no present evidence of the fact, save only the affirmation of *Paul* himself at that time. But had they had evidence of the fact, by being present at it, (as they that testify the voice to *Christ*, were eye and ear-witnesses of it) they would not then have thought reasonable to make any farther question, whether that, which they call the voice of the *Spirit*, or an *Angel*, were such or no, and being such, whether the resisting what was spoken by it, were the fighting against *God*. For the testifying therefore of the truth of such pretended facts; and indeed to leave no place for rational doubt in this matter, there is yet a farther answer, That the power of miracles, and the gifts of tongues that attended these voices, and descents of the *Holy Ghost* from Heaven, were irrefragable testimonies, and evidences of the reality of them, and could not be the immediate effects of delusions, being such as could not be wrought by the power of the *devil*, nor ever were pretended the effects of his oracular responses.

Sect. 31.

Many other ways of discrimination there are, by which the voices of the *devil*, or delusions magical might be distinguished from Divine, as that of concordance with predictions, acknowledged to have come from *God*; and such was the voice that was delivered at the descent of the *Spirit* upon *Christ*, the same that was foretold by the Prophet, and by him joyned with the mention of the descent of *Gods Spirit* upon him. And to the same belongs also the completion of the so many other things in him, which had certainly been foretold of the *Messias*, which Concordance with Divine truth, is most diametrically contrary to delusion. And besides, of the miracles which he did, most were to dispose,

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and cast out devils, (to restore health, as they brought diseases) who consequently look on him as (and proclaim him) their enemy; and although this may be thought to be done by them for some greater advantage (as the Devil may suffer one charm to counter-work another,) yet could they not here be thought to have used those endeavours to raise Christ into that power of destroying them, or to assist their utmost, to give him an authority in the world. Indeed the whole doctrine of Christ was so directly contrary to that, which had been maintained by the Oracles, that it cannot be imagined to proceed from that principle, to which they pretend. And the story is approved by Plutarch (and the effect hath made it not improbable, that there was some truth in it) that about Christ's time, a voice was heard on the Sea, and that the great God Pan was dead, and an huge bellowing, and roaring, as of infernal mourners, following it; and that this was probably the cause, acknowledgedly the forerunner of the Devils silence, and never speaking in the Oracles any more.

Sect. 32. As for the manner of the Devils giving his Responses in the Oracle, it is confessed by all, that then lived, and knew them, that they were delivered constantly by a man, who was seen, when he did it, and was called the *πνεύματα*, one that spake under the Oracle, out of the caverns of the Earth, (by the vapor of which Plutarch conceived him inspired, and so turned Enthusiast) which is a far different thing from a voice (no man being seen) which came in a clap of thunder, with a bright shining cloud from Heaven. This may reasonably satisfy the importunity of that objection also.

Sect. 33. And so much for the first part of the ground of our Faith in *gods*, the testimony on which it is built, which being an infallible word, derived and conveyed to us by the most creditable means, and which we have no temptation from Reason to doubt of, may sure be concluded a rational ground of belief.

## CHAP. II.

## A Digression concerning the use of Reason in deciding Controversies in Religion.

HAVING proceeded thus far for the convincing of the gain-sayer; it may not be amiss to consider the believer awhile, and give him the bounds or limits, within which Reason is obliged to contain it self, in matters of Faith, and this even by the verdict of Reason it self. And I shall do it by a brief stating of this Question.

Whether Right Reason be appointed the Judge of Controversies? Whether all doubts of all sorts be to be determined by the dictates of Nature, in the Heart of every Man which hath the use of Reason? Sect. 2.

To this I shall ground my answer in these two Rules, or Postulations. 1. That

The measure of mans natural power of knowing or judging of things, is his participating of those things (in some degree) with God, in whom they are as in the Fountain. So that the man may finde, and behold them in himself as truly, though not as eminently, or in the same degree, as they are in God. Sect. 3.

For certainly, if a man denude of all experimental, acquired, revealed knowledge, of all forain helps, left onely to himself as a man endued with Reason, should be questioned in any thing, and supposed able to express his conceptions, he would be fain to fetch out every word that he said, from within him, say onely what his own heart could discern within himself, otherwise he should be supposed to answer more, then he had means to come to the knowledge of; The work done would be above the proportion of the means to it; the conclusion would have more in it then the premises.

From hence follows this second Rule, That

Men are naturally able to judge onely of those things, which by some sure connexion depend on those attributes of God, which are communicable to (and particularly by) men, and are the like (as far

far as the *adumbration* or *transcript*, is to the *exemplar* Or *pattern* for *kinde*, though not *degree*, in *man* as in *God*.

*Sect. 4.* Now all *Controversies*, (i.e. all things subject to judgement) are reducible to two heads, *Goodness* or *Truth*; so that the *Question* now is, Whether *Right Reason* can infallibly judge, what is *good*, or *bad*, *true* or *false*?

And then to this I answer, First, Concerning the *first Head*.

*Sect. 5.* For a thing to be *good morally* (for *Metaphysical goodness* is all one with *truth*) depends, by sure connexion, from that *eternal justice* which is primarily in *God*, That being the *rule*, as it is the *Fountain*, of all *moral goodness* in men, or things: Every thing being *good*, more or less, as it more or less partakes of that *justice*, which is in *God*.

*Sect. 6.* Now this being one of the *attributes* of *God*, which are called *Communicable*, it is truly affirmed, That that *justice*, which is in *God*, is the very same in *substance*, communicated to *men*, though in a lower *degree*. And therefore it follows by the *second rule*, that man by the light of *nature*, and general *impressions*, i.e. by a power of seeing, whatsoever is within his *sphere*, is enabled by *God* to judge what is *just*, what not, what *morally good*, what *bad*. And no man judges amiss in these things, but he that hath his judgement corrupted by some *prepossession*, or *habitual vice*, or present prevailing *temptation*; and therefore of *moral Controversies*, i.e. whether a thing *naturally*, or in it self, be *good* or *bad*, *just* or not, *Right Reason* is a *judge*.

*Sect. 7.* Yet this with this *Caution*, or *limitation*, that it be not extended to those things, wherein the *Law of Nature* hath been elevated higher by any positive *Law of Christ*. For as *Right Reason* cannot judge what is lawful in any particular *Kingdom*, because what *Nature* hath made lawful, the *Municipal Laws* of that place may have forbidden, and made *unlawful*, (and that *Right Reason* cannot take notice of, unless it be told so) so in *Christ's Kingdom*, the *Church*, when he hath forbidden what *Nature* had left free and unforbidden, *Reason* (untaught by *Christ*) cannot say, that that is *unlawful*, yet generally will be found to bear that *Testimony* to *Christ*, that what *Christ* hath super-added to the *Law of Nature*, *Right Reason* will of its own accord commend, as best, or most *laudable*, and *excellent* in them that do it, though

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not knowing any *precept* for it, it will not affirm that it is necessary, so as it cannot be omitted without *sin*.

Then concerning the *second Head*, I answer,

That for a thing to be *true*, i.e. to have a *Being* either *potential* or *actual*, depends partly on *Gods Power*, partly on his *Will*. In respect of its *potential Being*, it depends on his *Power*, in respect of its *Actual*, on his *Will*. *Sect. 8.*

Now *Gods Power*, though it may in some sense be said *communicable* to the *Creature*, because all *ability* in the *Creature* is a gleam of infinite *ability* in *God*, yet is not this so communicated, as his *justice* or *Goodness* was said to be. For *Goodness* in the *creature* is a kinde of *image* truly resembling the *goodness* in *God*, and that a kinde of *natural image*, as is the face in the *Glas*, not a *voluntary* one, which hath its *Being* from the variable *Will* of the *Artificer*. But *power*, or *ability* in the *Creature*, is not thus a *natural image* of *Gods power*, but as a reflection of a thing, which *voluntarily*, and *variously* casts its beams. *Voluntarily*, I say, because the dispensing of his *Power*, either in *manner*, or *measure*, is a free act of his *Will*; and *variously*, because he doth it, first, *unequally*; and secondly, not so to any, but that he can (and sometimes doth) *withdraw* or *suspend* it, when it is bestowed; so that I cannot say, that as that which is *just* in *God* to be done, is *just* to be done by the *Creature*, so what is *possible* to be done by *God*, is *possible* to be done by the *Creature*. *Sect. 9.*

The reason of the *not communicating* of *Gods Power* to the *Creature*, as well as his *justice*, may be this, because it conduced not to the end of the *Creators* Creation, as the other did: For though *God* intended to make a *Creature* truly *good*, and *just*, yet he did not truly *powerful*. *Power* indeed being in it self not a *verue*, as *justice* is, nor in it self *morally good*, or *evil*, and therefore not so agreeable to the condition of a *Creature*, but rather indeed peculiar to the *Majesty* of a *Creator*. *Sect. 10.*

From all this it follows by the *said second rule*, that man is not able to fathom *Potentiall truths*, because *Power* is not the same in *substance* in *God*, and in the *Creature*, and therefore by what is in the *Creature*, he is no way enabled to conceive what is in *God*, and so consequently to define of any *Potentiall truth*, because though it may not be wrought by any thing that is in

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## Sect. 12.

the *Creature*, or within his sphere of knowledge, yet it may be by *God*.

All the *natural impression*, or *light*, that in this behalf a *rational Creature* hath, is that *two contradictories cannot be true at once*, and therefore I think, all *Principles* that are not thought fit to be proved in any *natural science*, (if they be truly so) may easily be resolved into this one, *A thing cannot at once be, and not be*. And this *natural impression* rises not from any observation of the *power* communicated to the creature, (for then still it would hold, that though *man* cannot do *contradictories* at once, yet *God* may) but from a *sight*, that this would be an effect of extreme impotency, more then is conceivable in any *Creature*, and therefore cannot be imputed to *God*, who is conceived *Omnipotent*, nor consequently to *man*, unless *God* should take away all degrees of *power* quite from him, and then he should be *annihilated*.

## Sect. 13.

Now for *actual truths* already in Being, which are works either *mediately*, or *immediately* of *Gods Will*, our *Reason* is no farther judg of them, then as *Gods Will* is communicated to us by some *Images*, or *Pictures* of it, either *substantiall* and *reall*, as when a thing done, is *presented* to the *faculty*, to which it is *objecible*, there a *real image* of *Gods Will* is impress in me, (& by that I may judg distinctly) or when it is *revealed* to me either from *God*, or from any other *witnesse*, of which in this matter I am convinced, that he partakes of *Gods veracity*, i.e. would not lie to me, and this may be called an *intentionall Image* of *Gods Will* impress in me.

## Sect. 14.

Thus may *Right Reason* judg of things in Being, either because it is so really represented to the senses, and that is *evidence*; or because is either *revealed*, or else *attested* by *God*, which *Reason* knows can neither erre, nor deceive, and this is *adherence*; or because such a concurrence of *testimonies* agrees to tell me so, as I have no *Motive* or *Reason* to *disbelieve*, and this is *humane Faith*, (which may reasonably take place, untill I either see somewhat, or receive somewhat by an *higher testimony* revealed to the contrary) which also is *weaker*, or *stronger*, according to the *importance* of the matter, *authority* of the *testifiers*, my particular *danger*, if I be deceived in it, &c.

Hence

Hence the *Conclusion* is, That

*Right Reason* is able to judge of all merely *Moral objects*, whether any thing be *good* or *bad morally*; of *Natural objects* in matter of *fact*, whether such a thing be done or no, by the help of the means specified, and by *discourse*, and *analogy* from things that we see are done, to judg that such another thing is *possible*: But of *supernatural truths*, such things as it never discerned in *Nature*, either in the kinde, or the like, it cannot judg any farther then thus. Either first, that though we cannot do it, yet for ought we know it is *possible*, (nay it hath a *Being*) with *God*; or secondly, that *God* hath affirmed it so, therefore I am sure it is; or thirdly, that comes to me from *authority*, that I have no reason to *suspect*, but on the contrary concurrence of all *Reasons* to be *persuaded* by it; nay, there are some inward *Characters* in the thing it self, that makes me cast off all jealousy or doubt of such affirmations, and therefore I believe it is so. But generally, and in *these*, it is no way *judge* of these last kind of *Contraversies*.

And therefore though *God*, in *moral actions*, even in himself, submits and appeals to *mans reason*, Isa. 5. 3. Ezek. 18. 25. yet in these latter he derides all those, that goe about to judge of them by *reason*, 1 Cor. 1. 20. And agreeably *Saint Paul* in his Preaching the Gospel, for the proving the truth of *Christianity*, was fain, faith a *Origen*, to use a peculiar way of demonstration. First, by comparing of *Prophecies* in the *Old Testament*, concerning *Christ*: Secondly, by *Miracles*; but in *practical matters* he appeals to that which was written in every ones heart, Rom. 2. 15.

To this purpose hath *Eulogius* an Oration against those, who think to be able to comprehend the true *Theology* of *Christians* (i.e. *Christians* discourses concerning the *Persons of the Deity*) by the *Wit*, or *Reason* of *Man*; and *Photius* hath approved of that discourse of his, that he doth call of *God Piously*, and devoutly, and set *Christian divinity* a pitch beyond *humane wisdom*, a superior to all other artificial method, or rules of *Art*.

d ἡ κρείττω πᾶσις ἐπιστημῶν. e Vid. Iust. Mart. p. 5. & G. A. & 8. C. 9. A. So Iust. Mart. p. 375. A. & for the πᾶσις τῶν, p. 379. So for the τῶν & of the union of *Christians* names, 382. B. σαφὲς ἐλέγχον & ἀπίστους τὸ πᾶσι περὶ θεῶν λόγους, 386. D. 387. D. 388. A.

D 3

In

## Sect. 15.

## Sect. 16.

a ἡ θεολογία  
πᾶσι τῶν  
διδασκῶν  
ἐκκλησιῶν  
Comm. Ccl.  
p. 4.

## Sect. 17.

b πᾶσι ἀν-  
θρώποις  
ἐπιστήμης,  
p. 862.  
c θεολογία  
ἐπιστήμη.

Set. 18.

In sum, it is observable in the writing of the *Scripture*, that generally in defining these *last* sorts of *Truths*, Gods authority is set down, as the onely *proof* of what is said, without using any other way of *arguing*, or secular *demonstration*: All that is indulged to mens *Reason*, being onely this; First, to consider, whether it be not very *equal*, and *reasonable* to believe God, without any other *motive*, or topick of *proof*, even in those things, which are *above*, or *beside* Right *Reason*, nay, against the proposals of *corruption*; and secondly, to search (by what helps soever a *reasonable* mans *prudence* and *diligence* can suggest, or furnish him with) which is that Word of God, which contains these *revelations*, which *Reason* tells them, they must *believe* without farther *reasoning*.

*Seet. 19.*

φάγω ἀνο-  
 λυθέντας καὶ  
 λογικῶς ἐπι-  
 γῶ, παρθε-  
 νηδαί, ὅς γ-  
 ατος, ἀν-  
 πάντως ἀτά-  
 της γινόμε-  
 νης τῷ μὴ ὄ-  
 τω συγκατα-  
 τίθμενά τι  
 σι. Orig.  
 cont. Cels. p. 8  
 Ἐ μὴ ἐξέλαζε  
 ἀλλὰ πίσει  
 σὸν, τίσις σ  
 ὀώσει σε.

But not to suffer my self to believe any thing (though revealed by the *Scriptures*) but what *Reason* otherwise would lead me to, is the same that *Celsus* perswaded the *Heathens* (of his side) to, against *Christ*, to follow *Reason*, and the rational guide in all the doctrines, we receive, all error and deceit being, faith he, brought into the world by Faith; and that they that believed any thing without *Reason* for it, are like them that delight in fugglers, &c. and therefore he laughs at all those who requiring not *Reason* for what they believe, use this phrase, *g* Do not examine but believe, thy Faith shall save thee, as men that are displeased with wisdom, and in love with folly. To all which *Origen*, as acute a Reasoner as any, opposes nothing, but the Evidence of Prophecies, and the Word of God for this rule of Faith. Which if it be not simply believed without any Philosophical rational enquiry, concerning the things affirmed in it, many will of necessity still wallow in infidelity after all that God hath done for the rescuing them out of it, and only a few find that by rational search, which before they believed by simple Faith.

### CHAP. III.

*Of the power of the affections and interests in matter of Faith.*

**T**He belief of *Christianity* being in the *first Chapter* supposed to be thus sufficiently recommended to the *understanding*, which is a *well-natured* faculty, and very ready to hear *Reason*, when it is offered to it: There is but one *obstruction* possible, and that is from *mens affections*, or *interests*, and that by two ways of proceeding: First *mediately*; secondly, *immediately*.

First, they work *mediately* by the *will*, and have sometimes that unhappy *influence* upon that, as by their importunity to *persuade it to interpose*, before the full *representation* or *proposal* of the object, and so to hinder the free access of the *Argument* to the *understanding*.

Thus we see it often in *prejudicate* and *passionate* men, who are impatient of hearing or considering any thing that may *dispossess* them. And thus we see it sometimes in those of a *better temper*, who yet being unwilling to lose any *advantages*, which they can make use of to maintain their present persuasions, are so intent upon their own part of the *dispute*, that they do not receive the *opposite Arguments*, with that equal *justice* of improving them to the height, with which they are offered, or to which if it had happened, that they had undertaken the *maintenance* of the other part, they could have *heightened* them. This latter, being not an effect of so great a *dis temper*, is not so discernible (to our selves especially) as the other, but yet is a *fault*, and that of ill consequence, and a deviation from the rules or *distributive Justice*, which would allow as much of our *attention*, or *diligence* to the improving of the *Arguments* of the one part, as of the other, and express as *impartial a kindness* to the *Neighbor* as to my *self*. And in all this the *Will* is culpable for being thus (more or less) *instrumental* to the *affections*. And so it is. *Negatively* alio, whensoever we do not use that *industry of search* as our *condition* permits, and the *importance* of the *matter* requires of us.

But



Sect. 4.

But then secondly, The *affections* and *interests* do themselves immediately, sometimes, perform their own business, they cloud and darken the understanding, and make it less capable and receptive of such representations as are made to it.

Sect. 5.

α φθαρίσκει  
τὴν ἀρετήν.

This made *Aristotle* to affirm, That *Pleasures* are in some men a corruptive of principles, i. e. that those common dictates of nature, &c. which are by all unbiassed men naturally consented to as true, and unquestioned, do yet to voluptuous men (and the same holds in matter of fear, and interest, and the other passions, same holds in matter of fear, and interest, and the other passions, and ill habits also) become matter of dispute, whether they be true or not; not because in Reason any thing can there be offered fit to infuse scruples into a rational man, or to combat with the far greater potency of Reason on the other side, which denominated them principles, but because these rational dictates having somewhat in them which is contrary to, and unreconcilable with passions, and sensitive pleasures, those consequently that have indulged to them, and espoused them, as the most desirable things, do, for the enjoying of them, undervalue, & despise the rational Arguments, which would cost them so dear (even the parting with their lusts) if they continued in that reputation, which is due to them.

Sect. 6.

β διὰ ἀργαῶν  
συνεθισμῶν, καὶ  
ἀνέχοντων τα-  
ραχύνειν τὰ  
εὐνοήματα  
τὸ ἦθος ἡ-  
μῶν ἀπε-  
θαρρύνει.  
Simplic. in  
Catheg. Arist.  
cδ εδ εδ οδ ασι-  
κῶς ζῶν, καὶ τῆς  
ἡδονῆς ἀπολέσματα, Anonym. Schol. in Categ. d' ἵνα μὴ τελευτήσωμεν  
ὕποδ' ἡμῶν παθόντων ἔχοντες, τὰς περὶ τῆς προσημασίας καὶ ἀκρίβειας φέ-  
ρουμεν. Id. ε' ὅσπερ ὁ θάλαμος ἀναμῶν, καὶ ἡ κεκαθαμένον, τὰ σπέρμα φέρειν ἰδὲν  
ἀνὰ διανοήματα καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς κατεργασίας, τὸ τῆς ἀνὰ διανοήματα ἐννοήματα καὶ κατ-

Hence is it, that the more prudent of Heathen Philosophers have proposed it as the best preparative, to the studying and search of truth, to have mens affections and appetites well regulated first (though not by readings, or studying the Books, and Science of Morals or Ethics, yet) by a assuete, and virtuous custome, by inartificial precepts, and sober education, &c. moderating and tempering their passions, and bringing them to live Orthodoxly, & left having their Reason disturbed by passions, they be not able to pass an exact judgment of things; And without this, say they, it is as impossible for a man to behold and judge aright of truths as (such truths as have any thing any way contrary to passions) as for a man with sore eyes to behold illustrious splendid objects, without being anointed or cured of their distemper.

Accordingly

Accordingly it hath been observed in the first Ages of the Church, that *luxurious* and *intemperate* men were of all others most hardly brought to believe the Christian Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, and Immortality of the Soul, because their carnal joys being so material and gross, and contrary to what Christ hath taught of an Eternal life, and of Spiritual bodies, and bliss, their being so deeply engaged, and immerst in the former, fortified them pertinaciously against all impression from the latter, and enabled them to hold out finally against the belief of those Christian Truths, which others of more ruly tempers, upon equal Reasons, and the same representation, did most readily embrace and assent to.

Sect. 8.

And it is worth our present consideration and enquiry, whether they which are now most willing to entertain doubts of the truth of Christianity, are either more sharp discerners of truth, then all others, that are not (or then themselves, before they) arrived to this pitch of Stanchness, and Scepticism; or again whether they have seriously spent any considerable time in reviewing their Principles, and, doing so, have sprang any special new Arguments, which they had not considered before, and those of such weight with them, that they wil contentedly expose themselves to all the torments of Hell (the sure reward of an Atheistical Antichristian life) upon the bare probability of those their Arguments, (which cannot be rationally done by them, unless their pretensions against Christian Religion exceed ours for it, in strength of credibility, as far as an eternal Hell exceeds those short sufferings of this life, to which Christianity betrays us, or as an eternal state of spiritual bliss in Heaven, doth surpass the transitory, unsatisfactory short pleasures of sin in this life) or whether it be not really their freer indulgence to some liberties, which Christianity admits not of, (and that more against light, and against the importunity of Gods judgements, then before) or perhaps some change of affairs abroad, which hath made the practise of Christianity a more inconvenient, costly thing, then it was wont to be; most men being willing to have the advantages of Religion, as long as there be but few, and supportable encumbrances, that attend it; and after changing their opinion of it, when they have run any hazards by it.

E

Which

Sect. 9.

Which truly is so far from being *new*, or *strange*, that it was a part of the *Character*, that our *Christ* set upon himself, and his *Doctrine*, both in that *parable* of the *Seed*, that fell upon *stony ground*, which is supposed to be scorched at the rising of the *Sun* upon it, and by that close of his answer to *Johns Disciples*, *Bliss'd is he that is not scandalized at me*, foretelling them that the most eminent and considerable danger to *Christian Religion*, is, That they which in prosperous times are forward professors of it, will, when their *Religion* begins to offer them *smart*, fairly forsake, and fall off from it.

Sect. 10.

Thus much hath been premised to this second *Head of Arguments*, on purpose to shew the influence, that matter of *advantage* may have on *belief*, and that on either side, not onely where mens *interests* do chance to thwart their *persuasions*, but also, and as discernibly, when they appear on their sides, to assist and confirm them.

Sect. 11.

For so certainly did the *sweetness*, and *well-tastedness* of the *Manna* work as effectually on the *Faith* of some *Jews*, make them as willing to adhere to *God*, and *Moses*, in opposition to returning to *Egypt*, as the *new* miraculous manner of the coming of that down upon them; and the *Milk* and *Honey* of *Canaan*, were of that down upon them; and the *Milk* and *Honey* of *Canaan*, were very good motives, and *electives*, and *engagements* to the *faith*, and *obedience* of others: And so in like manner the *carnality* of the *paradise*, that *Mahomet* promised to his *disciples*, hath much advanced the *credit*, and facilitated the *belief*, and disguised the *grossness* and *absurdities* of the *Alcoran*.

Sect. 12.

And because *advantages* are not to be disliked, because they are such, but because they *pretend*, and are mistaken to be such, when they are *not*, and by so doing, do rob us of those that are *truly* so, or that are infinitely *weightier*, and more considerable; and because that which is *really* the most *advantages*, is always most *rational*, most *prudent* for man to choose and pursue, and aspire to: Therefore it is, that to the former *Argument* of the *reasonableness* of the ground, or *testimony* on which we believe *Christian Religion* to be true, I now proceed to the *advantages*, that those that embrace shall reap by it, both because most mens *Objections* against *Christianity*, are founded in an opinion, that it is not an *advantageous* profession, and would have no other

quarrel

quarrel to it, if they were satisfied that it were, and also because though *advantageousness* no way contributes to the making, or proving a thing to be *true* or *false*, yet it doth to the making it more or less *worth believing*, or embracing, (for every slight *truth* is not such) and so more or less fit to be set up in our hearts, as our *Religion*.

For that by *Religion* every man entertains hopes of acquiring somewhat of *benefit* to himself, and would not chuse to enter into those bands, if he did not promise himself some *advantage* by it, is a *maxime*, which I shall not think fit to prove, or confirm in this place.

## CHAP. III.

## Of the advantages of Christian Religion in the gross.

There is nothing therefore after the *testifying* of the *Truth*, so proper for this present disquisition, as the consideration of the *advantages* of *Christian Religion*, and those advanced above all other *imaginable advantages* of any other *Religion*, as much as the *credibility* of *Christian Religion* is above the *credibility* of any other that pretends against it.

This I am by my premised method obliged to consider here onely as true in the *gross*. And that will be done by this one consideration, which hath been enlarged on \* in other Papers: That the *Precepts* of *Christ*, especially his *supper additions* to the former *Laws* of *Moses*, and of *Nature*, are, beyond all the contrary *vices*, or the lower degrees of the same *virtues*, perfectly agreeable to *Human reason*, cultivated, and improved, and heightened by *Philosophy*; so that that shall confess those things to be still most *commendable*, and most *excellent*, which *Christ* hath thought fit to command his followers. This might be demonstrated through all particulars; but I shall more strictly restrain my self to the *advantages* of a *Christian life*, by considering it first in order to *outward*, and secondly, to *inward advantages*.

The *outward advantages*, are again more *publick*, or more *private*:

E 2

Sect. 2.

\* See the Second  
Section on *Manna*  
30.

Sect. 3.

vate: Or the publick there is none sure more valuable, and more fundamental to all other, then that of Peace, and that is so immediately and inseparably annex to the Christian Doctrine, that would men think fit to be guided by that rule, were but Christs precepts constantly practised, there would be no occasion of distemper, or disturbance, through the world, either between Christian Potentates among themselves, or betwixt any Christian Prince, and the Subjects of his own Kingdom.

Sect. 4.

First, In what state or condition soever a man is placed in any Nation be he King or Subject, this commands him most strictly therein to abide with God; every man to content himself with his present portion, whether it be of Sovereignty, or of inferior estate under subjection: Then secondly, wheresoever the Supremacie of power is placed by the Laws of any Kingdom, there Christ requires subjection, and non-resistance in all subjects; and both by himself, and in the writings of his Disciples repeateth and impresseth that far more earnestly on the subject, then he doth the dutie of protection on the Supreme; and where they conjoyn them both, there they begin constantly with that of subjection in the inferior, as being of more universal concernment to the peace and preservation of the whole, and as that which earns the superiors performing of his dutie, as a due reward to their obedience. Thirdly, Christ prohibits self-love, thinking highly of ones self, all covetousness, ambition, animosities, revenge, doing, or returning of injuries, whisperings, backbitings, distrusts and jealousies, all scrupulous preventions of remote possible dangers; and fourthly, he commands doing as we would be done to, blessing of enemies, contempt of the world, not valuing any thing which is most tempting in it, and, above all things, pursuing of peace, with all men, (in the greatest extent imaginable) as much as in them lies, and wherever it is possible, even over the whole world. And fifthly, the Precepts delivered by Christ, (plain and intelligible to all) as they are a standard, by which every man is to measure his own actions, so are they also to examine others, and consequently they will fortifie against seducers, and steepe disturbers of a peoples peace, if, according to Christs direction, we trie them by their fruits, and reject and stop our ears against all those, whose doctrines bring not exact concordance to Christs practice.

<sup>b</sup> Matth. 22. 21.  
Acts 23. 5.  
Rom. 13.  
<sup>1</sup> Pet. 2. 13, 18.  
<sup>c</sup> Ephes. 5. 22,  
25. & 6. 1, 4,  
5. 9.  
<sup>1</sup> Pet. 3. 1, 7.

practise along with them. And where these precepts are put in practise, what possible inlet is there left, for disturbance or sedition to enter?

After Peace, Plentie is the most desirable publick good, and that is hardly separable from the former; but, beside the contributions, which all the fomenters of peace have made toward plentie also, Christian Religion hath peculiar waies of ascertaining any people of that, if its Laws be embraced and practised: For, first, Christ commands labor, and industrie, and diligence, banishes the idle, as a disorderly walker, disbands him as soon as he appears to be such. Secondly, he makes the rich man his Almoner, or Steward to distribute to every mans wants, as he is able; and as he blesses his liberalitie; and renders it the most probable course to make him rich, so he convinces him, that gathering, and hoarding up wealth is the meanest, and withall the most disadvantageous follie, and that the only real commoditie, in riches, is the joy, and happiness of relieving others, and the enhancing of their future reward by so doing. Thirdly, he forbids rapines, defraudings, gaining to our selves by any other mans losses: And fourthly, by putting the wealth of the world in a channel, to descend from superiors to inferiors, from him that hath to him that hath not, from the part that is filled, to that other that is emptied, he makes a certain provision for every part of the bodie. And beyond all this, fifthly, he hath taught men, that all the good of plentie is to be enjoyed in a competence, or a sufficiency, (and that there is onely more trouble, and more charge, and more fears, and more temptations annexed to any greater abundance;) And sixthly, he hath given all his faithful servants assurance, that he that hath the disposing of all, and knows what they have need of, will never so desistne them, that they shall want these necessarie things. And when plentie is thus interpreted, and these provisions made for it, there will be little possibility, that any people that live according to these rules, shall fail of that certain benefit of them.

Then for the private outward advantages to every Christian liver, they will be as discernible also. And these are of two sorts, First, those that have an universal influence on the comfortableness, and cheerfulness of the whole life, without which neither

E 3

health.

Sect. 5.

<sup>1</sup> Pet. 3. 6.  
<sup>2</sup> Thes. 3. 6.

Sect. 6.

health, nor wealth, nor any particular advantage, will have any taste or relish in them. Secondly, Those particulars of health, &c. Of the first sort, I shall be confident to prefer the observance of one Christian Precept. Attending to a mans particular calling, which, as it is the strict duty of every Christian, of what rank, or quality soever, so is it that, which sweetens the whole life to him, that lives orderly according to that rule. It is certain that assuetude, and custome hath a moral efficacy in it, to make every thing pleasant, that is accustomed, (were it not upon that score, it is not imaginable, that some sins to some men, which have natural aversions to them, should ever be taught to go down so smoothly.) By this means, business and bodily labor it self, which at the distance seemes most uneasy, to those that have been brought up in it, proves most pleasant and delightful. To such an one idleness, and want of employment is really the most uneasy affliction of his life.

Sect. 7.

And for him that is not brought up to either of these, yet we see by experience, and are able to give the reason of it, from the active temper both of the bodie, and minde of man, that there is no such constant torment, as the not knowing what to doe with his time, the having his hours lie upon his hands; for the removing of which, most of the vain, or sinfull mixtures of our lives are fought out, as cures, or divertissements, and having no real pleasantness in them, do yet imitate some, by ridding us of the contrary uneasiness, the burthen of that idle time, which is made more supportable by such varieties. Thus hath that uncharitable, and very mean quality of censuring, and bakkiting, and deriding of others, become so frequent, and fashionable in the world, (so inseparable from all our conversations, the onely modern good companie, as it is called) onely because many persons have no other employment for their time, but that of talking. and of that sort this is the most obvious to those, who have neither zeal enough to their own good, nor so much of friendship to those with whom they converse, as to make the faults of one another (in order to the reforming or fortifying one another) the subject of their discourse. To this and all other sins and vanities of this nature, this duty of attending the calling, is a certain Antidote or Cure: The advantages of which cannot be more eminently exemplified.

exemplified, then among those men, who by mistake are conceived to have no Obligation of Calling upon them, I mean those, of the Nobilitie and Gentry in a Kingdome. I shall enlarge on this instance a little.

The Calling of those that are not born to Estates, or Possessions, is generally acknowledged to be somewhat of labor, or industry for the acquiring of wealth, and to them may reasonably be confined that part of Adams curse (which is yet sweetned to Christians by Christ) that in the sweat of their brows they shall eat their bread. But then, those that have ample possessions left them, sufficient for themselves and familie, (and much more) and besides, a perpetuities of that to their families for ever, are certainly under no such obligation to labor, to encrease so fair an heap, or to spend that pretious time and sweat, and industrie on the bringing more water into the Ocean, or indeed more weight unto that burthen of wealth, which lies already an encumbrance (more commonly then a real advantage) on their shoulders. Their calling therefore, without question, consists in the scattering, not encreasing, in the discreet, charitable distribution of that yearly revenue, which is committed to their stewarding, i. e. in the using that wealth (to the richest advantages they are able) to the service of God. Such is the spending their time, as Citizens not of one Citie, but of the World, enquiring what is the duty of mankind, and how they may serve God cheerfully in those Precepts of Christ, which are of the greatest perfection, observing the wonderful things of Gods Law, and the harmonie which those notes of discord make, which to the unskilful or untunable ear are so harsh. This and much more in reference to God, and then in order to men, the well ordering of that part of the Common-Wealth, wherein they are employed, the relieving of those that want, the attracting inferiors, by Exhortation, Admonition, Correction, (but especially by exemplarie acts of all pietie) to the practice of Christianitie, and, as much as in them lies, bringing virtue into countenance, and reputation, into fashion, and credit in the world.

That wealth, and eminencie of place are very proper instruments toward this end, will not be needfull to be demonstrated here, all that is seasonable will be, to consider what a Treasure of

Joy and Sweetness would come in to every such person in a Kingdom, by a constant cheerful attendance on the favours of this calling, every one of them infinitely more proportionable to the appearing of a generous, ingenious mind than any thing else, which his ambition could suggest to him: Nothing vulgar or mean in it, and (beside all the particular delights in every act of each) the great transcendent comfort of having satisfied Conscience, the not having lived an unspeakable burden of the Earth, the having, in some measure, performed the task, for which he came into the world, would be to him that comes to reap them, unspeakable satisfactions, though, at the distance, perhaps the sensually desirous discerns not such excellencies in them.

Sect. 10.

Next are the several particular external advantages, as they are the desired portion of every individual man, (which beyond all other prudential methods imaginable) Obedience to Christ's Precepts provides for us. Of this sort, First, the health of the body (the foundation of all other outward comforts) cannot better be preserved from diseases, then by strict rules of constant temperance, and sobriety, and of fasting, and abstinence sometimes, of continence, or conjugal chastity, of active and industrious pursuit of the business of the calling; nor can it better be secured from wounds and maims, and violent deaths, then by mildness, and quietness, and forbearance, and bearing of injuries, all which are the special charges of Christian Religion.

Sect. 11.

The very same practices, beside these proprieties of advantage to the health, and ease, and strength of the body, have in them a far greater delight, and pleasure, and gratefulness to the senses, than any of the unchristian contraries. No pleasure in eating and drinking, like that in the temperate feeding on the plainest, wholesomest diet, and so in the rest.

Sect. 12.

For Reputation, another special outward advantage, it is clear, that besides, that Christian Religion teaches every man to think better of others than himself, forbids judging, and reproaching, and backbiting, and so most certainly preserves that Jewel entire to every man. The practice of Christian Virtues, commands respect and value even from those which least exercise them themselves. The proud man cannot chafe but reverence the meek, the debauched man the temperate, the greatest self-seeker him that

most

most divests himself of all his self-interests. There are not three things in the World, which so certainly bring a good reputation along with them, as Charity, and Humility, and Constancy; and these three are the prime commands of Christian Religion.

After the outward, I proceed to the inward advantages, the advantages of the Soul, and those either of this life at the present, or in order to another life.

Sect. 13.

The Christian Precepts tend evidently to the bettering of the soul in this life: First, by purging it: The Heathen Philosophers, Porphyrie, and divers others, especially the Pythagoreans, were much concerned in the pollutions of the soul, which they discerned, and beyond all things in the World desired, and endeavoured the purging them out, sought to Magick and Sorcery to that end, but terribly mistook in that way to it. Our Christ hath done this by the Grace, and Doctrine of Repentance, as far as is necessary for an inferior State. And so, is foretold by the old Prophets under the style of [the desire of all Nations] and [the expectation of the Gentiles] as he that brought with him in his precepts and in his graces, a full satisfaction to all the gaspings, and thirsts, of the most rational, and earnest appetites about us.

Sect. 14.

Secondly, by cultivating it with all useful knowledge, and true wisdom. For such, by the Oracles own confession, is Practical Knowledge, and of that kinde all the Philosophers that ever were, never ascended to so high pitches, as Christ's one Sermon in the Mount hath done.

Sect. 15.

Thirdly, by satisfying it, allowing it here those enjoyments, which of all others a rational soul is pleased with, 1. The pleasures of friendship, of profitable conversation, admonishing, and instructing one another. 2. The pleasure and special ravishment of relieving, and refreshing those that want, of making a poor man happy. 3. The pleasure of contentment, and desiring nothing but what we enjoy. 4. The pleasure of victories, in resisting, and overcoming temptations of all sorts, but especially of overcoming evil with good; and, whenever there is any unpleasant mixture, then 5. The pleasure of a difficult obedience, then by to approve our love and zeal to him, who hath given himself for us.

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And fourthly, by daily rewarding of it. By the comforts and joyous reflexions of a good conscience (as that is let off by the

Sect. 17.

contrary

contrary *Hell* and *torments* of a *bad*.) 2. By the severall *eases* that the severall *Christian* virtues give men here, the *ease* of *patience*, contrary to the *uneasiness* of *rage*, the *ease* of *contempt* of the *world*, contrary to the *perpetual drudgery*, and *toiles* of the *worldling*, the *ease* of the *continent* man, contrary to the *flames*, and *dissquiets* of the *libidinous*. 3. By the *present* experience of *Gods* loving kindness here, in answering of those *Prayers* which are *useful* for us; in *denying* those which would be *hurtful*, in *restraining* us sometimes, in *exciting* us at other times, in *speaking* peace to our souls. &c. 4. By *conversing* with *God* by *meditation*, by *thanksgiving*, *singing* *Hosannas*, and *Hallelujahs* to him, the most *joyous* employment in the *World*. Nay, by a *perpetuall cheerfulness*, *rejoycings* *alwayes*, which, as it would be another mans *reward*, *rejoicings* *alwayes*, which, as it would be another mans *reward*, so is it the duty of a *Christian*. 5. By the *expectations* of a *reward* in *another* life, which though *future*, is yet by the *benefit* of two *Christian* virtues, *faith* and *hope*, *foretalled*, and *anticipated*, and made *present* to us. And all these, if there were not infinitely more, were *sure* advantages enough to *entertain* a *short* life of *fifty* or *threescore* years, and *secure* it from being *wearisome* to a *Christian*, or from *needing* those *sinful*, *shameful*, *unworthy* *divertisements*, that all other sorts of men, on *purpose*, that their *time* may not lie upon their hands, are fain to seek out unto themselves.

Sect. 18.

Lastly, the *advantages*, which a *Christian* reaps by *Christ*, are in order to *another* life. And those I shall best represent to you, by shewing these two things. 1. The *Valuableness* of the *reward* promised by *Christ*, and *aspired* to by *Christians*, infinitely above all other *rewards*, that any other *Religion* pretends to bestow upon men. 2. The *Attainableness* of that *reward*, and the *blame* that will light on none but our selves, (so that we shall be bound to acknowledge our selves most *stupidly* *wretchless*, and *irrational*) if we do not attain to it.

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For the former, the *Valuableness* of the *Christians* future *reward*, infinitely above the *wages* of any other *Religion*, that will appear, 1. by the *Immaterialitie*, and 2. by the *Eternitie* of it: Both those it is defined to be by *Christ*, and by being so, is concluded to be an *eternal*, infinitely *blissful* state; And that *Christ* said *true* in that, neede not again be proved, *God* Himself having

having been proved to bear him *witness*, that all that he said is *true*. The *Immateriality* of this *reward* demonstrates it *agreeable*, and proportioned to the nobler part of us, the upper or *rationall* soul, all other *grosser* pleasures, the *Mahometans* enjoying of *Women*, and the *Jews* long life in a *Canaan*, being gratifications to the *viler* parts of us, our *senses*, or *bodies*, and to those too, in their *vilest* state, as they are *natural*, not as they shall be *spiritual* (and equal to *Angelical*) *bodies*.

Having said this, I need not add the *shamefulness*, and *emptiness*, and *unsatisfactoriness* of all *bodily* pleasures, proceeding partly from the *covetous* *ingrateful* condition of that *best* part of us, as the *heathens* have styled the *body*, partly from the great *meaneness*, and *poorness*, and *baseness* of all *bodily* contents, (so unworthy to be the *ambitions*, or any thing, but the *servants*, and *attendants* of the *reasonable* soul) and the instant *fatieties*, and *irk-somnesses*, that they *alwayes* are attended with, such, as nothing could make any *meer* man place any considerable value upon them, were not he either cheated into it at the *distance*, by the false glosses that other men put on them, and by seeing, what *hazards* are willingly run in *pursuit* of them; or were he not early engaged in an *habitual* indulgence to them, which makes that difficult to part with, which he hath enjoyed so long, and consequently which *imitates* some *pleasure*, (and is mistaken for it) by the contrary *painfulness* of giving it over.

Sect. 20.

Whereas on the other side, the *immaterial*, *spiritual*, more *sublime* satisfactions to the *pure* undefatigable *Spirit*, the *rational*, *immortal* soul within us, as they cannot be liable to those *basenesses*, and *emptinesses*, so neither are they in danger of those *fatieties*; and by *satisfying*, and *blissing* that part of us, which is infinitely most *excellent* in our *natures*, must of themselves necessarily be concluded most *superlatively* *excellent*, and *deserve*, as such, to be infinitely *preferred*, and most *valued* by us.

Sect. 21.

Having said this one thing of the *immateriality* of the *Christians* future *reward*, and *agreeableness* to that part about us, which alone is worth *providing* for (the *happineses* of the other *inferior* parts being consequent to, and included in this, and a *provision* withall being (by the wisdom of our *God*) made for them that they shall no longer *desire*, or want those enjoyments, which

Sect. 22.

is perfectly the same, if not, with some advantage, better, than if they had them ) it is not possible any farther improvement, or accession should be made to this reward, but only by the perpetuating of it.

Sect. 23.

And that is that other part of *Christ's promise*, That the bliss, which he thus bestows, shall in respect of its own plenitude never be exhausted or diminished, nor again, through the Repentance of the donor, or the envy of any other, ever be withdrawn or forced from us.

Sect. 24.

And this is a great enhancement, and evidence of the rationalness of our Religion, how severe soever *Christ's commands*, or how rigid his *exactions* are supposed to be, or what *sharpness* soever we here are forced, or permitted to endure, in approving our obedience to him. If there be any difficulty in the obedience, or ungratefulness in the sufferings of a *Christian's* life, yet the abundant recompense of the present advantages, and, after those, of the soul-ravishing unspeakable bliss (infinitely above the weight of the hardest; or roughest part of *Christ's* task of performances, and above the proportion of the sorest portion, that any pious man tastes in the afflictions of this life ) were they supposed to be of the same equal duration, would make our hopes, and patience, and perseverance perfectly rational, according to the ballances with which indifferent men weigh, or *Husbandmen* labor, or *Merchants* traffick here on Earth.

Sect. 25.

But when to every minuit of a pleasant, not painful obedience, to every mite of pressure ( which *God* that sends, gives strength also to bear cheerfully, makes matter not of patience, but victory, and rejoicing to us ) there is most immutably ascertained to us by *Christ's* an eternal ( ETERNAL ) weight of glory, how impossible is it, that those few sower drops of so short transitory obedience, and patience, should not be drowned, and lost in that vast Ocean, whereinto within a while they shall be really, and at the instant, by Faith, and Hope, they are ( in effect, and by equivalence ) poured out ?

Sect. 26.

If there be any thing now left disputable in this matter, it must be, whether it will not be justly deemed irrational, that *God* should so over-top his measure, so over-proportion his wages to us, reward that so glorioud, which, if there were never a Heaven

Heaven hereafter, were, at the present, reward sufficient to it self, and infinitely preferable before the condition of any other mans life. But the advantage of that being on our side, we shall have little reason to dispute or complain of it.

The onely thing imaginable to be replied, will be, that *Christ's* *institutions* are as immaterial, and as eternal, as his rewards, and the reason not presently discernible, why our short, empty, nauseated pleasures, the sins of a short life, and the joys of those sins, far shorter then the shortest life, should be punished so sadly, and so eternally. This scruple of the *Atheist* hath been searched to the bottom, and answered \* in other Papers ; and the brief of it is this, That the choice being referred to us, to take of the two, which we best like, Eternal death set before us on the one hand, to make eternal life the more infinitely reasonable for us to chuse, on the other hand, and the eternal Hell ( whensoever we fall into it ) being perfectly our own Act, neither forced on us by any absolute decree of *God*, nor irresistible temptation of the Devil, nor our own *sins*, but as truly our wish and choice, and mad purchase, nay, much more truly, and properly, then eternal Heaven is ( when our obedience is first so wrought by *God's* Grace, and yet, after that so abundantly rewarded by the donor, ) it is certain that if there be any thing irrational, it is in us unkind, and perverse Creatures, ( so obstinate to chuse what *God* so passionately warns us to take heed of, so wilful to die, when *God* swears, he Will not our death ) and not in him, that hath done all, that is imaginable to be done to reasonable Creatures ( here in their way, or course ) to the rescuing, and saving of us.

And so this hath by the way demonstrated also, the attainableness of that reward, and the no kinde of fault of *God* ( he hath sent his Prophets, his Son, his Spirit, his Ministers, his Mercies, his Judgements, all sorts, and new methods of working deliverances : and Salvations for us and all slaughtered, and crucified, and grieved, and abused by us ) but all meetly of our selves, if through our irrational prides, or sloths, we do not attain to it. I shall not need therefore farther to enlarge on that, especially having \* else where abundantly demonstrated the truth of it.

Sect. 27.

\* Pract. Catech.  
last Edition, pag.  
303 304.

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\* Pract. Catech.  
last Edition, pag.  
304 305.

## CHAP. V.

*The exceptions against some particulars in Christian Religion; and 1. Gods dispositions of Providence.*

Sect. 1.

IT now remains that I proceed from the *gross* to the *retail*, from the *general* to the *particular* view, and consideration of those *particular* branches of *Christian Religion*, which seem to men at this time to be least supported with *Reason*. And they will be of two sorts, either concerning *Gods Providence*, or concerning *Gods Commands* now under the *Gospel*. The first concerns his *Wisdom* in dispensing the things of the *World* among men, the second his choice of *duties*, wherein to exercise us.

Sect. 2.

For the first of these, it will briefly be reduced to this question, *Whether it can be deemed rational, that injustice should prosper, and patience never be relieved or rewarded in this life*, as it is every where taught to be the *Method of God*, and is most eminently exemplied on *Christ* himself, in his own person, in the *Gospel*.

Sect. 3.

Where first, If the *question* were, whether *Injustice* could be really *favoured by God*, or by him so approved, and encouraged, as to be thought worthy of any the least *reward*, though but of a *cup of cold water*, by him, or (as *consentaneous* to that) whether *Injustice* by going *unpunished* here, and by being *triumphant* in this *World*, might be thence concluded to be an *act* either of *sanctity* or of *innocence*, owned, and commended by *God*, by its thus prospering, I should then, I confess, acknowledge this to be *irrational*, and not plead, or undertake to be the *advocate* of that *Religion*, which should teach one such *Doctrine* as this.

Sect. 4.

For this were to make a *God* (who by being such, is supposed to be of an *immutable* *Wil*, and *justice*) to become *inconstant* and *contradictory* to himself, to forbid *oppression*, as *contrary* to his *Wil*, and yet without making any change in the matter (without withdrawing what he hath given to one, and disposing it to another, as in the case of the *Egyptians Jewels*, and the *Canaanites land*) to reward it, as agreeable to his *Wil*, to pronounce that

that no *covetous person*, without repentance, shall inherit the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and yet to give the *covetous*, beside an infallible title to the *Kingdom of God*, continued to him, as a special *Saint* of his, the addition of all the  *blessings of this life*. In a word, this were the same *irrational* thing, as to affirm, that *thief*, which prospered in his *assault*, and actually robbed the *Traveler*, and perhaps killed him too, to be by that means turned *honest man*, and that nothing but miscarrying in his attempt could denominate, or demonstrate him a *thief*; that no *sin* were any longer a *sin*, if it were once acted, no *oppression* any longer *oppression*, if it were permitted to come to its *fulnes*; that every the foulest violence as soon as it were come to the *height*, bearing down all the *resistances* of *divine* and *humane* *Laws*, and *force*, did then presently cease to be *violence*, and by being the *lowest* fiend in hell commence *ipso facto* the most *rewardable Saint*: And therefore the only *Religion*, that hath been known in the *World* to maintain and countenance this, that of the *Turk* or *Mahometan*, I profess to believe absolutely *irrational*.

Sect. 5.

But for *Christianity*, that is so distinctly contrary to this, that the great fundamental *History*, upon which all our *Religion* at once is built, is the most lively *example*, and *doctrine* of the *contrary*. For when *Christ* himself was delivered up into the *power* of wicked men, and by them arraigned, and reviled, and crucified, not onely the *Disciples*, which were his constant attendants, but his *Army* of *Ministris* of *Angels*, that were always at his command, doing nothing toward his release, when this consultation of the *Sanhedrin* became successful, and obtained the desired event against him (the *highest*, and most *prosperous* *oppression* of the greatest *innocence* and *virtue*) then though there were more circumstances, which might affix this on *God* his *Father*, and seem to draw him into partaking in it, then we finde recorded of any, or all other *sinful* actions (as that *Gods Hand* and *Counsel* did foredetermine this to be done, that *God* foretold it by all his *Prophets*, and from the certainty that they could not lie, doth, when it is done, conclude, that *Christ* ought thus to suffer, that they that did it, even the chief *Rulers* of them, had the excuse of some *ignorance*, untill *Gods* raising him from the dead dispelled this mist from before their eyes, that what

Acts 3:17.

God



God had thus for ever, and pre-determined, viz. that Christ should suffer, he had thus fulfilled, Acts 3. 18. that he that suffered, voluntarily laid down his life, and by a speedy taking it up again, was freed from the saddest part of death, the remaining under the power of it, nay was, in the issue, so far from being the worse for suffering, that, beside the glorious advantages that came to his disciples and children by it, he himself was in that humane nature of his highly rewarded and exalted for this suffering; though, I say, all these circumstances concurred to make the injury less, the crime more excusable, and altogether more fit, and more honourable to be charged upon God, and so to turn it from the crime of murder, to the virtue of obedience to Gods will, and charity, and benefaction to mankind, (and even to him that suffered); yet this one all of the Jews, their doing, against the express command, and will of God, that thing, which yet was by God \* determined to be done, their crucifying an innocent person, that desired nothing, but their amendment, their committing that act, which by God was forbidden, under the Commandment of murder, is thought fit by that God, whom the Christians worship, to be punished most prodigiously, and exemplarily, that ever any sin of the deepest die, and the most mischievous effects, was ever punished, even with the utter desolation of the whole Nation, and all the prodigies that have been read of the greatest pomp of aggravating circumstances, the calling Heaven and Earth together, to make the execution of these crucifiers the more solemn and remarkable; so far is Christianity from owning any such irrational doctrine as this.

Sect. 6.

But this being thus disclaimed, and the Doctrine, which is acknowledged to be Christian, being cleared to be only this that in Gods dispensations and providence, and governing of the World, under the Gospel, it is not unusual for injustice to prosper, and patience, and innocence never to be relieved, or rewarded in this life. This I shall now assume on me to be clear to be perfectly reasonable; and it shall be by thus taking it asunder.

Sect. 7.

First, That wicked men should be permitted to be wicked when all fair reasonable means have successfully been used to bring them to repentance, to restrain them from waxing worse and worse; that they that will not mend by all the probable, and most effectual means, should at last be left to themselves, and become

become incorrigible; that God should not proceed from persuasion to violence, and force them to be good (contrary to the nature of man in this his state of proficiency, who was created with a will, or freedom of doing evil, if he pleased, and contrary to the nature of free, and rewardable goodness, which, if compelled, ceaseth to be such) who will not be restrained from evil without force: This will never be deemed rational in God, who hath another Tribunal to arraign, and punish those, who will not submit to Exhortation, and Discipline here. But on the contrary it will very ill become the servant of God for his own ease, and security, to with the disturbance of that method of God with mankind, to expect that man, which, when he was in innocence, was created with a liberty to chuse the evil, should now amidst the briars, and thorns, after the provocations of a long vitious life, have such shackles laid on him, as that he should not be able to break Gods Bands and Laws; and all this onely that the good man may be protected, who, if he be not, knows that 'tis far more for his advantage, then if he were.

Sect. 8.

Secondly, That they which are wicked, and have cast off all restraints of Divine and Humane Laws, which break through all the ties, and securities, that promises and oaths can lay upon them (the greatest protection for innocents, that any Religion, or Law, hath ever provided for them) should, by these advantages above other men, be able to over-reach, and defraud others; and by this means having acquired a power of hurting, should, when they have it, make use of this power, to do what is most agreeable to their lusts and interests to do. This again hath nothing in it strange, or irrational: It is far more strange, that it is not always thus, that (wicked men, allowing themselves all the liberty, and being by their very sins furnished with all armor, and instruments to work their will, and all innocent men, that resolve to continue such, being by this means disarmed, and naked before them) the wicked should not get the whole World into their possessions.

Sect. 9.

This certainly were to be expected, and by this means all that have wicked inclinations, would, in any humane likelihood, be encouraged to act to the height of their power of hurting, without there not a peculiar hedg of providence to defend the meek, with-

out

out any of their own (considerable) contributions toward it, to guard them wonderfully in the open field, without any visible means of doing it : And if this shall otherwise happen at some one time, perhaps but once in many Ages, and that for some very great end, in *God's Wisdom* more considerable to the *God-like Government* of the whole World, then the miraculous rescuing of a few meek innocents from a short oppression (in earthly things, which are not worth their possessing) could be deemed to be ; there is sure no great wonder in this, nothing irrational in the sometimes permitting of it.

Sect. 10.

He that were secured in his inheritance in a quiet Kingdom, as long as any man enjoyed his own, as Majesty were permitted on the throne, or Law, and Justice on the bench, would never desire a fairer conveyance, or a longer lease of the most valued possessions of this life ; and this security remains to the meek man, though once in many Ages it may have happened not to prove good unto him.

Sect. 11.

And as there hath been nothing strange, or irrational on the part of the wicked oppressor that prospers, so next on the part of the patient, or sufferer, that smart's under him, there will appear to be as little.

Sect. 12.

For first, *Absolute innocence* is a thing, which ( save in the person of Christ ) hath never been met with in Man or Woman on the Earth ; and therefore he that is guilty of no fault in one particular, may yet be culpable, and punishable in many others ; he that is legally possessor of an estate, and hath done nothing to forfeit it in Law, may yet have sinned against God, and so have punishments due to him from that eternall Justice ; which if they fall upon his body, or estate in this World, there is nothing irrational in that, but especially if so light a Discipline may passe for all the revenge, and ( through the sufferings of Christ, and interposition of mercy ) avert all future punishment, and be accepted in commutation for the torments of another Judicature, this sure is all the charity and bounty in the World, that may be admired, but not complained of as unreasonable.

Sect. 13.

Secondly, That those that for their other faults might justly be punished, should have this punishment inflicted on them by those

those which themselves are wicked, and are actually such in thus afflicting them, If this seem to have any thing unreasonable in it, it will soon be answered by the necessity of the matter, which makes it impossible for any but wicked men to be employed in it. The Israelites were once used to root out the Nations, but that by an infallible Commission from God, the Supreme Law-giver ( and whose will being once made known, over-rules all former Laws ) and the universal owner and disposer of all the World, and the possessions thereof : And by this Commission this became to them not only lawful, but necessary, an act not onely of justice, but of obedience ; and so upon the like Commission, the Levites killing their Brethren was an act of sanctity, a consecrating themselves unto the Lord, those bloody Sacrifices were in a manner the Ceremonies of their Consecration to their Priests Office. But then, first, all this depended upon the infallible validity of their Commission, which had it been falsely pretended by them, or had they not been ascertained that it came from God, their actions had been as ungodly, and murderous, as Abrahams sacrificing his son must have been deemed, without the like Commission : And secondly, this Commission was by no means to be enlarged to any other, but those particular subjects, or matters, to which it was given. The Jews might not at that time have destroyed or invaded any other Nation, upon the face of the Earth, nor might the Levites at any other time have killed their Brethren, on strength of that command, much less may any other People of any other Nation, on strength of that example. And so now that such Commissioners are out-dated, when all is left by God in the hands of standing Laws, in opposition to new Revelations, and consequently when that which is most just for me to suffer, or God to permit ( or by prospering in him, to inflict on me ) is most injurious in him that doth it, were it not perfect fury, much above the pitch of irrational, to demand that Gods dearest Children should act as the vilest men ? To require such explicate contradictions, that none but godly men should be permitted to oppress, to kill, to commit Sacrilege, to lay waste, and to destroy, to break all those Commandments of God, which he that doth, ipso facto, ceaseth to be godly ? If there be any

any *Wickedness* to be done in a *City*, shall the *righteous* be the onely men to doe it? This were worth *wondering* at indeed: But for the *wicked*, whose *trade* it is, whose *joy* of heart to be thus forever occupied, he is in his *element*, he needs no *call*, or *incitation* to do it. The *turning* him out of that *office*, and *employing* any body else, were the greatest *unkindness* to him, as the *casting* the *Devils* out from *tormenting* the man, was by them looked on as the *destroying* them before their time, whereas the *Angel of Light*, would have looked upon it as a degree of *Hell*, had hee been sent in, on that errant to *torment* him.

Sect. 14.

Thirdly, Beside the perfect *reasonableness* of having offenders punished *temporally* here, (which were *reasonable*, if it were for ever in another *World*) there is a second, not onely *Justice* but *Mercy* in such *sufferings*, on whomsoever they fall. They are *Admonitions*, and *Doctrines*, and *Spiritual* *Medicines*, *Disciplines* of the soul, to awake us out of *secure*, and *stop* in *wilful* sinning, and are by *God* on purpose made use of to that end, when *prosperity* hath been long used, and experimented to have no such *auspicious* influences in it, to be proper to *seed*, and *foment*, very improper to *starve*, or *subdue* enormities. And if the *Physitian* administer a *bitter* *Potion*, if the *Surgeon* apply a *Corrosive*, or *Cautick*, when *Jalaps*, or *Balsoms* are judged, and proved to be *ineffectually*, sure it is not the manner of men to count such methods *irrational*.

Sect. 15.

Nay, it will be no *Hyperbole* to affirme, that the addition of such *documents* as these, may sometimes deserve to be preferred, and more pretiously valued, then all the *Doctrines* in the Book of *God* it self without these, one such *seasonable* Application, then all other *Receipts* in his *dispensatorie*. The Word of *God* gives rules of living to all men, but those so general, and unapplied, that it is ordinary for *passionate* men not to see themselves concerned in them. These *punishments* and *visitations* will be able to bring *home*, and make us, while we are under the *Discipline*, confess, that we are the very men to whom by *peculiar propriety* they appertain.

Sect. 16.

But there is yet a *third* *sublimier benefit*, of such *dispensations*

tions of *God* under the *Gospel*, which will render them abundantly *rational*. And that is the exercise of many *Christian* *graces* of the greatest price in the sight of *God*, and such as shall be sure to be the most richly rewarded by him, which were it not for such changes as these, would lie by us *unprofitably*, such are *Patience*, *Meekness*, *Humility*, *Contentedness* with whatever lot, faithful dependance on *God* in all outward things, *thanksgiving* for plenty, and for *scarcity* too, a submitting to *Gods Will* in *suffering*, as well as doing it cheerfully, yea, and to his *Wisdom* too, in resolving *Gods* choices for us to be absolutely fitter for our turns, then any our own *wishes*; and lastly, that *Wisdom*, which Saint *James* speaks of, the skill of *Spiritual* judgment, which can really prefer this state of *suffering* for *Christ*, (an excellence that *Angels* do not partake of) beyond any other state or condition of life.

James 1. 2.

Were it but onely for the variety, that all the burthen of the day might not lie on those *graces*, which are exercised in fair weather, but that those other, provided for the storm or winter, might take their turns and give them some relaxation, this would be very *rational* and useful for us, as *Aristotle* saith, that the change of motions from up hill to down hill, and so back again, doth provide against *lassitude*, more then the constancy of any one, be it in the easiest *smoothest* plain, because that layes all the burthen incessantly upon one pair of *muscles*, without any relief or assistance from any other. But when withall, every exercise of each of these *graces* hath attending it an addition of more *Gems* in our *Crown*, more degrees of *Glory* in another *World*, (that I may not adde also of present joy, and Satisfaction, and Raptism in the present exercises here) then sure the *superfluities*, and pleasures of this life, the any thing that is ever taken from us by the *Havpier*, and *Vulvures* of this *World*, are richly sold, and parted with by the *Christian* (which knows how much, or indeed how little they are worth enjoying) if they may thus bring him in that rich freight of never fading bliss in another *World*. And this will serve for justifying the *rationalness* of *Gods* dealing with us now under the *Gospel*, in respect of his *Providence*.

Sect. 17.



Christ to give to them, that continue obedient and constant to him, and to none else, and when the *fearing of them which can hurt, and kill the body*, the caring for, or preserving of this present life, doth at any time, or in any case, resist, or obstruct the performance of that duty, which Christ then requires or expects from me; there Nature commands me to despise the less, and preserve the greater; and if it be not absolutely willing to Sacrifice the present to the eternall Life, and consequently to prefer the obeying of Christ to the preserving of this fading short life, it must acknowledge it self a *blinde Heathen Nature*, (that knows nothing of an eternall future life) and of him that can cast both Body and Soul into Hell) or else an irrational wilde Nature, that knows these distances of finite, and infinite, and doth not thinke them worth considering.

SecT. 10. It is therefore my most charitable opinion of those that ob-  
ject the Principle of *Self-preservation* to the Doctrine of *taking*  
*up the Cross*, and determine us free from the *Obligation* of  
paying obedience to *Christ*, when it cannot be done without  
endangering of *Estate*, or *Life*, that they speak out of their  
*memory* only, what they have read in Books of that *supreme*  
*Law* of the *preserving ones self*, but do not withall remember,  
that if that *self* signified only the *Body*, it was the *Philosophie*  
of them, that knew nothing of the *immortality* of the *Soul*, or  
the *endlesness* of an other *Life*, or if they were aware of the  
*Christian Doctrines* of *eternity*, they never called the *Body*, that *self*,  
that was to be so solicitously tended.

Sect. II. Christ  
 α ἀδιαφο-  
 ρείν εἰς ὅλο-  
 θύτων ὅπο-  
 ῖον ἐκείνης ἢ  
 ἐξουμένους  
 ὅπως φυλάττω-  
 σιν τὸ ἀνθρώπου  
 ἐν Πλάτ. 82.

α ἀδισχο-  
ρεῖν εἰδωλο-  
θύτων ἀπο-  
γενομένης καὶ  
ἐξομνυμένης  
ἅπασα φυλά-  
ς. ζ τὸ ἀρε-  
ον Pfa1.82.

Christ

*Christ* did not *b* really suffer in the *Flesh*, but onely in appearance, would not be perswaded that either hee had any *c* need of their lives, or indeed expected it from them, *d* being some, as they said, to save their lives, to die, that they might not be killed. Where the mistake was clear and visible, that they thought they were these *transitory Lives*, that *Christ* came to preserve, and not those *other Lives*, which were to be conveyed over to *Eternity*.

Non hic, nec apud homines confessionem putant constitutam, sed in celo. *Tertul. com. Gnost. 6. 10.* Nec Deus humanum sanguinem sivit, nec Christus vicem passionis, quasi ipse de ea salutem conieciturus, expoicit. *Tertul. com. Gnost. cap. 15.* Semel Christus pro nobis obiit, semel occisus, ne occideretur, si vicem expectat, num & ille salutem de mea nece expectat? *Tert. com. Gnost. 6. 1.*

The fate of those *Gnosticks* at that time, was very remarkable, and that which would render our irrational fondness of these *bodily lives* yet more irrational. Their great care was to preserve their lives, and their prime dexterity, in order to that, to comply constantly with the powerful persecutor; that was, especially, with the *Jews*; (for though the *Sword* was in the Heathens hand, yet the great malice against the *Christians* was in the *Synagogue*, from \* thence sprang all the Persecutions.) To this end, those *Gnosticks* took upon them to be great zealots for the *Mosaic Law of Circumcision*, and generally plotted with the *Jews*, and approved themselves to them. At last the *Roman Army* comes against *Jerusalem*, takes *Jews*, and *Gnosticks* together, and destroys them all; and so *Christ* was as remarkably a true Prophet in that, as in any one particular, *That he that would save his life, should lose it*, (that very temporal life, that all his compliance with the *Jews* was designed to save) and *hee that would lose, i. e. venture, and lay down his Life for Christs sake, should finde it, i. e. have it more probably preserved, and continued to him here, then they that were most solicitous for it, and, whether he lost or kept it here, have it restored to him to continue eternally.*

And if that *promise of the Gospel* have truth in any sense of it; then is the *command* no irrational command, of taking up the Cross to follow Christ, when he can, if it be for thy turn, except

b ἐκ ἀλη-  
θῆς, vid. Ig-  
natii Ep. ad  
Smyrn. ἐκ ἐν-  
σαρκί ἀλλὰ  
δοκίμαται, vid.  
Cyril. Hier.  
Catech. πρὶ  
αἱρέσε.

\* Synagoga  
Judæorum  
fontes perle-  
cutionum,  
*Text. b. 15*

Scēt. 12.

Scēt. 12.

1

of thy taking up the cross, without its bearing thee, or, if he do not, can pay thee abundantly, for what thou lovest, reward thee with Eternity.

Sect. 14.

If I could foresee any other command of Christ, that could fall under our jealousy, and censure : I should proceed to it, and be confident of approving it exactly rational. As it is, I am at an end of my designed *Method*, and am glad it hath been contrived into so small a compass, being now at leisure to retire to my *Meditations*, which will, I hope, be more calm, being thus disburthened, and make it my first Theme to discourse with my self, how extremely rational it is, that those very turns of Providence, which have been our great temptation, and they say, made many *Atheists* among us, should be reviewed again, and upon second demurer thoughts engage, and instruct us all to become more Christian.

*Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ; Prudent, and hee shall know them ? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walke in them, but the transgressor shall fall therein, Hol. 14. 9.*

FINIS.

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