

Marcus Minucius Felix
HIS
OCTAVIUS:
OR,
A Vindication
OF
CHRISTIANITY
AGAINST
Paganism.

Made English.

L O N D O N,
Printed, and are to be sold by *John Whitlock*
near *Stationer's Hall.* 1695.

THE PREFACE.

THOUGH a *Preface* to so small a *Treatise* as this is, may by some be judged needless and superfluous, yet having reason to believe, that the **READER** will not be unwilling to understand something concerning the *Book* it self, its *Author*, and the *End* of publishing it in *English*, I shall endeavour, as briefly as may be, to give *him* all the satisfaction I can.

AS for the *Treatise* it self (which contains a *Conference* or *Dispute* between a *Heathen* and a

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Christian, in defence of their respective Religions) it has been always accounted one of the most Eloquent and Curious Pieces, that *Antiquity* has transmitted to us; and in which so many Excellencies shine forth, as it is hard to determine whether it be more eloquent or pithy; more florid or sound and convincing. The *Relations* are succinct and clear; the *Arguments* strong and perswasive; the *Allegations* pertinent and delightful, and the *Whole* deck'd with so comely a grace, and such lively figures of *Rhetorick*, as makes it truly admirable. The *Heathen* enters the Lists first, and alledges all that can be thought of, in favour of *Pagan Idolatry*, and all that the *Hell-born* Malice of those

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those times, had invented against the *Christians*, pressing it home with all the advantages that *Art* and *Learning* can afford. The *Christian* on the other side, with a great deal of soundness and address, overthrows all his *Reasonings* in defence of *Heathen Superstition*; beats him with his own Weapon; demonstrates to the eye the palpable falseness of those *Scandals* rais'd against the *Christians*, and asserts their Religion with so much vigor and truth, and represents it so lively (as it was all beautiful in its primitive *Purity* and *Simplicity*) that it can't but greatly affect and delight the Devout READER, who must needs rejoyce to see the Natural amiableness and Charms of that
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Religion, which (alas!) the Superstitious inventions and the unsuitable lives of its Professors have so miserably disguis'd. Besides all this, the *Discourse* contains such an immense variety of *Instances* and *Histories* of great Antiquity, suited to the *Dispute* in hand, as makes the reading of it very pleasant and agreeable; insomuch, that I dare say, that never more *Matter* was crouded into so small a *Volume*. But I should be too tedious, should I endeavour but to touch the Heads of those peculiar *Excellencies* it is adorned with; wherefore I shall break off here, and add a few words concerning the Author MINUCIUS FELIX, whom we find to have been a Roman Knight, and by Profession

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session a *Lawyer* or *Advocate*, who were commonly call'd *Orators*: And as to the Reputation he was in, S^t JEROME's Testimony may suffice for all, who calls him a *Great Roman Orator*. And indeed he who peruses the *Book* in *Latin*, shall find that he was no less. As touching the *Parties* introduc'd to maintain the *Dispute*, we have no further account to give of them, what they were, besides what's here express'd; though some suppose, that the CÆCILIUS here mentioned, was that Great CÆCILIUS, who was afterwards so Famous amongst the *Christians*, and in remembrance of whom S^t CYPRIAN took the Name of CÆCILIANUS.

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THE *End* of my *Translating* this *Great Orator*, was chiefly that this rare and useful *Piece* might no longer walk up and down as a *Stranger* amongst us, but become of our familiar acquaintance, by appearing in an *English* Garb; though I can't but confess, that the hopes I conceiv'd that my Name might exempt it self from common Oblivion, by being seen in the *Title-Page* with the Famous *MINUCIUS FELIX*, was no small inducement to me, to undertake this Labour. But besides all this, I thought this *Treatise* would be of special use in this *Atheistical* and *Apostatizing* Age, to represent to our unthinking *Godless* Crew, the unreasonableness of what they would

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would so fain make themselves and others believe, viz. That this *Universe* is an Effect of *Chance*, and not of *Wisdom*; and that the *Glorious Fabrick* of *Heaven* and *Earth*, had no *Architect*, but was at all adventures jumbled together into this *Excellent Order*, by a fortuitous Concourse of *Atoms*: An *Opinion* so grossly contradictory to *Sense* and *Reason*, that it cannot be admitted by any, but those who have shaken hands with their own Nature, and by their Vices and Debaucheries have degraded themselves beneath the *Beasts* that perish; for they know and acknowledge their *Masters* and *Benefactors*: But these more *Brutish* than the *Beasts*, know neither their own,
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nor the World's Great Lord and Maker. Neither will it (as I hope) prove less seasonable in this dark night of *Apostasie*, to hold forth to our *nominal Christians*, but *practical Heathens*, the genuine Lustre and Brightness of that *Holy Profession*, which once shone so gloriously in the *Countenances* and *Lives* of its *Primitive Embracers*, that it made all the World to be in love with, or to admire it; if by this means they might be brought to bethink themselves, and at length to return into the Way of *Truth* and *Holiness*, from whence they are gone astray.

AS to this *Translation*, the READER may be pleas'd to take notice, that I have all along made
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great use of the *French* of Monsieur D'ABLANCOURT, so worthily esteem'd by Ingenious Men; yet not without having an eye to, and continual comparing of it with the *Original Latin*; though I never thought it fitting to tie my self too superstitiously to the Authors Words, but deem'd it sufficient to express his *Sense*; which I have been very careful not to vary from in the least. For I conceiv'd it my duty where I could not attain his *Graces* and *Ornaments*, at least to speak his *Mind*; and to give the *Substance* of his Arguments, where my poor ability could not reach to clothe them in so rich a *Dress*. For all which I challenge nothing but the READER's Acceptance,
and

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and where it needs, his Pardon ;
which might perhaps be an Encouragement to me, to attempt something further in the like kind hereafter.

FAREWEL.

Marcus

Marcus Minucius Felix

HIS

OCTAVIUS ;

OR, A

Vindication of CHRISTIANITY
against PAGANISM.

WHEN I think of my dear *Octavius*, and reflect on those delightful minutes we have spent together, I feel such a pleasure, as if I were still enjoying those happy days ; so deep an impression has his *Idea* left in my Mind, since my Eyes have lost the sight of him. And indeed 'tis not without cause, that I am so sensibly affected with the loss of so Excellent and Holy a Person, as he was ;
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seeing he always express'd so great a love for me, that in our pastimes, as well as most weighty Affairs, we ever will'd and dislik'd the same things, as if one heart had been divided between us. And as he had formerly been the intimate Friend of my youthful Loves, and Companion with me in my Errors, so when those clouds were dispell'd, and I came out of the darkness of Ignorance into the light of Truth, he did not disdain to accept of my company, though indeed (which was the more glorious for him) he far outwent me. I say, as I was lately reflecting on all these things, I fixed my thoughts on that serious and important Discourse which he entertain'd, in my presence, with *Cæcilius*, whom by means thereof he brought from his vain Superstitions to the knowledge of the true Religion of *JESUS CHRIST*.

OCTAVIUS was come to *Rome*, partly upon account of business, chiefly, perhaps, to see me, for whose sake he made no difficulty of leaving his Family and Children in that tender
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age when they are the most lovely; I mean, by reason of their Innocence; when they begin to speak half words, and when their broken and faltring speech makes whatever they say extremely delightful. It is not to be express'd with what a joy I was transported at this unexpected felicity, of meeting so good a Friend, whom of a long time I had not seen.

WHEN the first motions of this joyful surprisal were a little over, after our being some days together, and telling one another our adventures, we determin'd to go to *Ostia*; the Baths there, near the Sea, being very good for me, to dry up my humors, and the Vacation of the Vintage affording me leisure for that retirement. It was at the time when the greatest heats of the Summer begin to abate, and the ripening Fruits give notice that the Harvest is at hand. Being arriv'd in this fair City, we went early in the morning to take a walk upon the Sea-shore, to enjoy the fresh air, which quickens the spirits, and imparts liveliness to
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the whole body, and where the Sands, in which the footsteps make so slight an impression, do not tire the Walker, but suffer him without weariness to receive the benefit of a pleasant and healthful Recreation. As we were thus walking on, *Cacilius* who was in company with us, seeing an Image of *Serapis*, as we pass'd by, did according to the Superstition of the Vulgar, kiss his hand to it, in token of worship and reverence. Whereupon *Octavius* turning to me, said; Brother *Marcus*, you do not like a good man to suffer one, whom you daily converse with, to remain in such gross blindness, as to stumble at stones in broad day-light, which though they be shap'd into some figure, and are perfum'd and crown'd, yet still are nothing but stones. Indeed it concerns you, as well as him, not to let him go on in this Error.

WITH this kind of discourse we pass'd through the middle of the City, and drew towards the Sea-side, near a wide and open place, where we saw the waves gently beating the shore, and

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and smoothly spreading the sand, as if they had been fitting it on purpose for a walk. And as the Sea is never quite calm, even when the winds are still, so though the waves were neither high nor foaming, yet in great curles they came rowling towards the shore. Thus we delightfully wander'd by the Sea-side, and beheld the waves coming and breaking themselves at our feet, and then returning to be swallow'd up again in that vast Element, and keeping along the edge of the gently bending shore, with pleasant stories we deceived the tediousness of our journey: For *Octavius* entertained us with a Discourse of Navigation, in so pleasant a manner, that we could not grow weary either of walking, or hearing him. And that we might not go too far, we return'd back the same way we came; and being arriv'd at a place where Vessels are dry-dock'd, we saw some little Boys vying with one another at an exercise of making shells to graze, as it were, upon the water. The Sport is this: They gather small
B 3 shells

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shells on the shore, picking up such as are the most smooth and round; then stooping to the ground, with all their strength deliver them, so as they may but just raze the surface of the water; and he that makes them glide furthest, and gives the most bounds, does win the Game. Whilst *Octavius* and my self were looking on these Children, *Cecilius* taking no diversion in their sport, nor any notice of the activity of these Youths, kept aloof thoughtful and melancholick, shewing by his clouded countenance that he had something in his mind that troubled him, insomuch that it prompted me to accost him with this discourse. How now? What is become of that gay and charming temper, which you are wont to have even amidst your most serious Affairs? Whereupon he reply'd, I will not conceal from you, that *Octavius* has affronted and vex'd me to the heart; for it seems that he does blame you, only to offend me, and accuse you of negligence, only to expose me as an ignorant and blockish Fellow. I am re-

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solv'd to seek my amends for this injury, and to have this matter discuss'd between us in good earnest. It's like he'll see then, that it is a more easy thing to talk of these matters with those of his own Party, than fairly and orderly to debate them with Learned Men. Let us go and sit down upon yonder stones that jet out into the Sea, and secure the Baths from the raging waves, where we may rest our selves, and argue the Case more at leisure. We went therefore and sat down, they placing me between them both, not out of complement or respect to my Quality, (for Friendship either finds or makes all equal) but as a Judge and Moderator of their dispute, that I might the better hear the reasons of both Parties, and keep the two Disputants asunder. Then *Cecilius* began thus: Brother *Marcus*, though you be already resolved about the Things which are now controverted between us, since upon careful examination and tryal of both, you have left the *Service* of our *Gods*, and embraced *Christianity*; yet

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at present your mind should be so disposed, that you may hold the scales even, like an equal Judge inclining to neither Party; that so your Sentence may rather appear to be the effect of the force of our Arguments, than of your own preconceiv'd Opinion. Therefore if you'll sit down as a Stranger, who has no acquaintance or interest on either side, it will be no hard task to demonstrate to you, that all the things of this World are uncertain and doubtful, and that the knowledge we have of 'em, is rather Opinion than Certainty; so that I cannot but wonder when I see some Men so lazy, as rather inconsiderately to yield to the first Opinion that presents it self, than to be at the pains to search things to the bottom. It is indeed a thing to be lamented (and which puts one into a passion to think on't) to see some ignorant men, who have no manner of Learning, and do scarce throughly understand any of the ordinary Mechanick Arts, boldly to decide the highest and most important Matters in the World,

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World, which have exercis'd the Wits of the *Philosophers* of all Ages, and who after all, have never been able to come to a final determination of them. For Man's understanding is so little capable of such transcendent knowledge, that we cannot apprehend even things that lye at our feet. And it seems to me a kind of impiety, to be so curious, as to sound the secrets of *Providence*, and in our inquiries to reach after the heights of Heaven above, or to rifle the bowels of the Earth beneath. Happy therefore, and wise enough should we be, if according to the ancient Oracle of Wisdom, we could but know our selves, and keep our mind from this vexatious and unprofitable labour, and confine it within the bounds of Reason and its own mediocrity. And if notwithstanding our creeping on the ground, as we do, we cannot hinder our selves from attempting to mount up to the Heavens, and to soar above the Stars; let us not at least add this second Error to the former, and fill the World with vain Opinions

nions and Fancies, on purpose to affright men. For whether the Principles of Things be certain Seeds, which by a Natural propensity have joyn'd and united themselves together; or that the Members of all this spacious Universe, have meerly by Chance been fram'd and settled in the orderly manner in which they now are; What reason is there why men should fancy a *God* Creator of the World? What, if we suppose the Fire to have kindled the Stars; and the matter whereof the Heavens are made, to have spread and sustain'd it self; that the Earth was poised by its own weight, and the Sea made out of the moisture which was drain'd from that heavy lump; What ground is there in all this for this Religion? for these Fears? What means all this Superstition? Pray what is Man, and all other Creatures in the World, but a mixture of Elements, which in a short time dissolve themselves, and return into their first Being, without the help of an overseer, workman, or disposer of all these Changes? Thus by a
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continual confluence of the fiery parts of matter, of which the Celestial Lights are made, we daily behold new Suns to shine: And by a like cause the Vapours and Exhalations of the Earth produce Clouds, which afterwards being condensed, and by degrees carried upwards, do at last dissolve themselves into Rain, or else cause blustering Winds, ratling Hail, roaring Thunder, and dazling Lightning. Which is the reason also why these Meteors do casually and indifferently discharge themselves, sometimes on the top of a Hill, sometimes on a Tree, sometimes upon Temples and Consecrated places, sometimes upon Palaces, sometimes on such as fear *God*, and sometimes upon those that contemn him. Shall I speak of the variety and uncertainty of Storms and tempestuous weather, wherein it is easy to be observ'd, that without any choice or exception, all things here below are turn'd topsy-turvy? Don't we see both good and bad involv'd in the self same shipwrack, without any distinction of Vice and
Virtue;

Virtue; the guilty and innocent consum'd in one fire; and almost all confusedly perish in time of Plague, and in War the best many times are the first cut off? Nay, in time of Peace, Wickedness is not only upon equal terms with Virtue, but prefer'd and ador'd: So that when a man considereth the prosperity of the Wicked, he is at a loss what to think of them, and does not know whether he has more reason to detest their Crimes, or desire their happiness. Now if the World were govern'd by a Divine *Providence*, and the authority of a wise and powerful Being, surely *Phalaris* and *Dionysius* the *Tyrant* had never mounted a Throne; nor *Rutilius* and *Camillus* ever been banish'd, nor *Socrates* forc'd to take down the deadly draught. We see here Trees loaden with Fruits, Fields well stor'd with Corn, and Hills with Grapes, ready for Vintage, which promise a plentiful Harvest; and all on a suddain, this may be utterly spoil'd with rain, or destroy'd by a tempest. Surely it must be own'd, that
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either Truth lyes deep buried, and the secret springs and wheels of *Providence* are altogether unknown, or (which is the most probable) that *Chance* only governs the World without any Law or Order. And therefore since either the vicissitudes and motions of *Nature* are uncertain, or we our selves certainly under the Dominion of *Fortune*, how much more reasonable and just is it to retain the Doctrine of our Ancestors, and adore the *Gods* which our Fathers have worshipp'd, and in whose Service we have been brought up from our infancy, than to go about to judge of Things so far above our reach as the Deity is? And is it not better and safer to believe our first Fore-fathers. who living in an Age of great simplicity, and in the very infancy of the World, deserv'd to have their Gods either easie and propitious, or exercising a gentle government like that of Kings? For indeed we see all the Towns, Provinces and Kingdoms of the World have some Religion or other, and peculiar Ceremonies,

monies, each worshipping their own *Country-Gods*; as the *Eleusnians* do *Ceres*; the *Phrygians*, *Cybele*; the *Epidaurians*, *Æsculapius*; the *Chaldeans*, *Bell*; the *Assyrians* and *Sydonians*, *Astarte*; the *Scythians*, *Diana*; the *Gauls*, *Mercurius*; and the *Romans*, all of them together; which is the reason why their Power is so greatly encreas'd, and themselves become Masters of the whole World, having carried their Dominion almost beyond the course of the *Sun*, and the bounds of the *Ocean*: For by the Religion and Valour of their Arms; by guarding their City with the Service of the *Gods*, Nunneries of *Vestals*, and other Chast *Votaries*, with a vast number of *Priests* and *Ceremonies*; by appeasing their angry *Gods*, when other Nations would have Blasphemed them, and even at that time when *Rome* was sackt, and had nothing left her but the *Capitol*; by adventuring (in celebrating their *Mysteries*) to pass unarm'd through the Camp of their Enemies, whom they astonish'd and daunted with the bold daringness

daringness of their Zeal; by continuing still to worship their vanquished *Gods*, even at the very instant when their Enemies having taken their City, made 'em feel the insolence which their Victory prompted them to; by searching for *Deities* throughout the World, to adore them and give them Temples at *Rome*; nay, besides all this, by erecting Altars to unknown *Deities*, and the Souls of departed *Heroes*; And in a word, by worshipping the *Gods* of all Nations, they are deservedly become the Masters of, and have given Laws to all Nations. Which Devotion of theirs hath ever been kept up amongst 'em, and encreased more and more in process of time: For age confers I don't know what of Sacredness upon Temples and Holy Things; inso-much as the more ancient and unknown their Original is, the more are they revered. It is not therefore without reason, I confess (though I may be mistaken) that our Fore-fathers did so much betake themselves to *Divination*, by observing the flying and chattering of

of Birds, and by consulting the entrails of Beasts ; and did institute the Service of their *Gods*, and dedicate Temples to them. Do but look into the Histories and Records of past times, and you will find that all these Mysterious Ceremonies were ordain'd either to return thanks to the *Divine* Bounty, or to divert the stroke of his Wrath, or to appease the fury of it. Witness the *Mother* of the *Gods*, who at her coming into the City, made known the Chastity of a Lady, and deliver'd *Rome* from the fears of her Enemies. Witness the Statues of those two Brothers on Horse-back, which were erected in the same place where they shew'd themselves, when returning from the defeat of *Perses*, with their Horses out of breath and all in a foame, brought the news of the Victory, the very same day they had got it. Witness those Games which were set up anew, upon a Dream which an ordinary man had, that *Jupiter* was offended. Witness the *Decii*, who won the Battle by sacrificing their lives for the Service

Service of their Country. In fine, witness *Cartius*, that noble Youth, who leapt on Horse-back into that yawning Deep, which open'd it self in the midst of *Rome* ; and by devoting himself to appease the Anger of the Gods, closed up that dreadful Abyss. And indeed the contempt of *Divine* Bodings hath occasion'd the presence of the *Gods* more often than we could have wish'd for ; which the River *Allia* (that unfortunate Name) sufficiently teacheth us, as well as the Battle of *Claudius* and *Junius* against the *Carthaginians*, which was not so much a Fight, as a miserable Shipwrack. The Lake *Thrasimenus* hath seen its waters stain'd and swoln with *Roman* Blood, because a Consul made light of the Verdict of the *Augurs* ; as likewise at another time for some just imprecations which we slighted, we were made a Prey to the *Parthians*. But passing by things more remote, concerning the Birth of the *Gods*, and the Gifts and Presents made to them ; and omitting also the relations of the *Poets*, and those Oracles

cles that have foretold things to come, lest *Antiquity* should seem too fabulous, do but cast your Eyes upon these Temples, which at once are the City's Ornament and Defence, and you shall find them more August and Glorious, by reason of the *Divinities* which inhabit them, and are there ador'd, than by all the pomp of their Embellishments, or riches of their Gifts and Offerings. From thence it is that the *Priests* are inspir'd with the knowledge of future Events, and teach us how to prevent dangers to come. Here they are instructed to heal the sick, to give hope to the afflicted, succour to the needy, comfort to the unhappy, and ease to all our pains. And whilst we are taking our rest, we oft see, hear, and acknowledge those very *Gods*, whom in the day-time we impiously deny, disown and forswear. Since therefore it is agreed by all Nations, that there are *Gods*, though their Nature and Original be unknown, why should we suffer those bold and impudent men, who being puffed up with

I don't know what impious wisdom, endeavour to weaken and destroy a belief which is no less useful and comfortable, than it is ancient and venerable? And though *Theodorus* the *Cyrenian*, or he that was before him (*viz. Diagoras Melius*) to whom *Antiquity* gave the Sirname of *Atheist*, have strove to overthrow this Opinion, that they might extinguish all manner of Religion and Reverence of the *Gods*, and dissolve the strongest bond of Humane Society; yet shall their counterfeit Wisdom, never pass for Philosophy in the esteem and approbation of Wise and thinking Men. If the *Athenians* banish'd from their Country one *Protagoras*, because he rais'd disputes about the *Gods* (though he did it rather in a Philosophical and inquisitive, than profane way) and caus'd his Writings to be publickly burnt; shall we suffer men (pray give me leave in the heat of discourse to speak out my mind freely) I say, shall we suffer men of an unlawful, infamous and desperate Faction, without fear of punishment

ment to attempt against the *Gods*; and gathering together a company of silly and ignorant people, especially Women, who by reason of the weakness and credulity of their Sex, are easily deceiv'd and impos'd upon; train them up to a wicked Confederacy, or rather Conspiracy; into which they are not initiated by any holy Rites, but by impious Crimes practis'd in their Night-Conventicles, Solemn Fasts, and horrid and inhumane Feasts? These are the people that sculk in the dark, and flee the light, who are mute in publick, and full of chat in their private Assemblies. They with horror and disdain look upon our Temples as polluted Graves; They spit at our *Gods*, deride our Ceremonies, and pity others, whilst themselves are most of all to be pitied. They slight the Dignities of Priesthood, and contemn the Sacred Purple, whilst themselves have scarce cloaths to cover their own nakedness; and out of a strange madness and unheard-of boldness, they make nothing of present torments, whilst

whilst they are strangely fearful of uncertain future miseries; Nay, the very fear of dying after Death makes them fearless of Death, so powerful an ascendant groundless fears, and the false hopes wherewith they flatter and comfort themselves, have got over their Spirits. And in the mean time, as Weeds spring fastest, and ill habits daily encrease more and more; so this pernicious and accursed Sect every day waxing stronger and spreading it self throughout the World, it is but reason that a timely care be taken for its total extirpation and suppression. By secret signs and tokens they know one another, and their mutual love almost anticipates their knowledge. They make their Lust a part of their Religion; and so much doth the foolish and mad Superstition of these People glory in their crimes, that they promiscuously call one another Brothers and Sisters, and by this seeming holy Compellation make filthy Incest of that which otherwise were but simple Fornication: Which Wickedness of theirs is so much

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nois'd abroad in the World, that the truth thereof cannot well be question'd; no more than that other report which goes of them, *viz.* That by a mad Superstition they worship the Head of that vile Animal [an *Ass*]; Which indeed is a sort of Worship very suitable to their Lives and Manners. They are also said to pay a great veneration to the Privy parts of their *Priests*, as if they meant to adore the *Genitals* of their Ghostly Fathers. Now whether these Reports be true or false, I will not take upon me absolutely to determine. But their Nocturnal Ceremonies and conceal'd Devotions seem to be sufficient Arguments to perswade the truth of them; and they who tell us that they worship a Man who was crucified for his Villanies, and that the Wood of a Cross constitutes a great part of their Devotion, do worthily attribute to them Altars suitable to their Crimes, by making them to adore what they deserve. Moreover the Ceremony they observe upon admitting any to their Religion is no less horrible

horrible than notorious. A Child cover'd all over with Paste (to conceal the Murther he is designed for) is set before the new *Profelyte*, who, by their command, strikes his knife many times into it, until the blood run down apace from all parts, which by them is as greedily suckt up; and this common Crime is made the Pledge and Surety for their Silence and Secrecy. These are their Sacrifices, which are worse than all Sacriledges. As to their Feasts, they are but too well known; concerning which our *Cirthenian* Orator tells us in his Speech, that on a certain day (solemnly appointed for that purpose) they assemble themselves all together, both Men, Women, Children, Brothers, Sisters, and in a word, people of all Ages, Conditions and Sexes; and after they have eaten and drunk to excess, and that the heat of the Wine and Meats begins to kindle their blood and provoke their lust, they cast a morsel to a Dog, who is ty'd to a Candlestick, so far out of his reach, that in striving to leap at it, he overthrows the Candlestick,

stick, and puts out the Light. So that having thus rid themselves of the only Witness of their infamous actions, and taking boldness from shameless Darkness, they confusedly mix themselves together, as it happens; and therefore though it may chance so, that they are not all Incestuous in deed, yet they are all of 'em so in will and design; since the Sin acted by any one of them is not only consented to, but wish'd by the whole Company. Several other things of this nature there are, which I purposely omit, I having already produc'd but too many instances of their Errors. And indeed were there nothing else against them but that of their endeavouring to conceal so much their Mysteries in obscurity, it would be an evident proof of the truth of all we say, or at least of the greatest part thereof. For why do they so industriously strive to hide that which they worship? Men are not afraid to publish their honest actions; but such as are unjust they seek to cover with silence and privacy. Why have they

they neither Altars nor Temples, nor any Images, at least which are known? Why don't they speak but in private holes and corners, whither they repair by stealth, if this their conceal'd Religion be not infamous and criminal? But pray, from whence, who, and where is this one only solitary and forsaken God of theirs, whom not one free Nation, no Kingdoms do worship, no not the *Romans* themselves who have worshipp'd all the *Gods* of the whole Universe? Among all the people in the World there is but that one miserable Nation of the *Jews*, who have served one God alone; and yet they did it too in a publick manner, with Temples, Altars, Rites and Sacrifices; and notwithstanding the power of this God is so inconsiderable, that both himself and his People are now Captives to the *Romans*. But what strange and wonderful things don't they invent? They assert, That to this God, whom they neither see, nor can demonstrate, men's Lives and Actions are particularly known; That he hears their words, searcheth their

their most secret thoughts, and is present every where ; thereby making him troublesome , restless and curious, even to impudence ; for he hath a hand in, or at least a knowledge of every thing ; He is present every where, and leaves nothing unpried into. But how can this be? How can he possibly have an eye to every thing in particular, who has business in all places at once? Or how can he be sufficient for all, whilst he applies himself to every particular? Nor do they content themselves with all this ; but they threaten all the World, and the Stars themselves with an universal Conflagration ; as if any thing could alter that Eternal Order, which Nature her self has established ; the Elements break their Alliance, or the *Divine* Harmony of the *Spheres* be dissolv'd, for to destroy this wonderful *Fabrick*, which contains and surrounds us. To these they add several other Old Wives Fables : They tell us, That after Death their ashes and dust shall rise again ; and (by I don't know what strange kind of perswasion)

on) they stedfastly believe those Errors they have invented, and fancy themselves already risen and born again : Which is a double madness and folly, to believe that the Heavens and Stars which we leave as we found them, shall perish ; and that Men, whom we see hourly dye and have an End, as they have had a Beginning, shall for ever abide. And as if Dead Bodies being kept from the flames, should not by length and process of time be turn'd into dust and ashes, they will not burn their Dead, and blame us because we burn ours. Do you think that it matters any thing, whether they be consum'd in the Earth or in the Sea, or devour'd by Fire or wild Beasts? For if Dead Bodies have any sense, any manner of Burial must needs be a torment to them ; but if they have none, that way whereby they are soonest consum'd, is the best. Nevertheless being prepossess'd with this ridiculous opinion, they promise themselves (as the Godly Party) an everlasting happiness after this Life ; and threaten

threaten others (as being the Rebel Rout) with torments that shall have no end. I have many things to say here, to prove them worse than others; but I will not take pains to make it out, since I think it sufficiently done already. But were it granted that they are as righteous as others, is it not as a certain truth believ'd by most, That *Destiny* is the cause both of the good and evil, that we see in the World? Which is your judgment also. For as some impute all humane Actions to *Fate* and *Fortune*, so do you to *God*. Which is in effect to say, that you have not voluntarily embraced this Sect, but *God* has Elected you thereunto; So that thereby you make your *God* an unjust Judge, who does not punish the sinful, but the unfortunate. Pray tell me, shall you rise again without, or with a Body? and shall that Body be the same you have now, or another? If you say without a Body: For my part I don't believe there is either Life, Soul, or Sense without a Body. And how with a Body?

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It cannot be your own; for that is already wasted. Shall it be another? Then it will be a new body, and not the old one repair'd. Besides, so many Ages are past and gone; and yet who has ever been seen to rise and come to Life again, though but for a small time (as the *Poets* feign *Protesilaus* did) that we might have some ground to believe this *Paradox*? Indeed these Stories are but *Chimeras* of a crack'd brain, and the vain comforts which *Poets* have invented and pleasantly express'd for their own and others diversion. And these old Fables new vamp'd, your credulity entertains and applies them to your *God*. Why don't you suffer the experience of things present to teach you, at least, how vain these your promises and hopes of the future are? Poor wretches! You might learn, what will be your Fate after Death, by the miseries of Life which you now endure. The most and the best of you (as you say your selves) are ready to starve, being in want of all things necessary for this mortal Life, and under
great

great troubles and miseries; which *God* suffers and takes no notice of; An evident proof, that he either will not, or can't afford you any relief; and by consequence is either impotent or unjust. Thou who flatterest thyself with an immortality after this Life, art thou not sensible of thy condition? Canst thou deny thy weakness, when thou tremblest at dangers, when thou burnest in a Fever, when thou art rack'd with pain? Miserable delusion! Not to own one's misery, even when one feels it! But to leave these common Matters; behold there are executions, punishments and torments that await you, and crosses, not to be ador'd by you, but endur'd; with fires and flames, which you own yourselves afraid of, whilst you foretel and threaten them to others. Where is that *God* that can raise the Dead, but not relieve the Living? Are not the *Romans*, without the assistance of your *God*, become the Masters of the World, and of your selves too, whilst you in the mean time refrain from lawful pleasures,

pleasures, and entertain your sullen humour with troublesome fears and anxious thoughts? You are never seen at any publick Spectacles and Triumphs; nor do you ever frequent our solemn Feasts and Combats in honour of our *Gods*. You abhor the Meats which *Priests* have touch'd, and are afraid to taste the Wine that hath been presented on our Altars; So that it seems you stand in some awe of those very *Gods*, whom you deny. You wear no Garlands on your Heads, and reserve your Ointments and Perfumes for the Dead; Nor do you so much as adorn the Graves of your deceased Friends with Chaplets. You look pale and trembling, and are indeed real Objects of pity; but it must be of the pity of our *Gods*, for yours take no notice of you. Miserable Wretches! who deprive your selves of the enjoyments of this Life, and deceive your selves in the expectation of another. Therefore if you have any wisdom or modesty left, give over gazing upon the Stars, and searching into the *Destiny* of

of the World; And think it enough to look to your own feet; especially for such rude and unlearned People as you are, who hardly understand matters of a Civil concernment, much less are able to discourse of *Divine* and *Heavenly* things. But if you have such an itch of *Philosophizing*, follow the Example of *Socrates* (you who think so highly of your selves) that was the Prince of Wisdom: All know the answer he was wont to make to those that ask'd him any Questions about Matters of *DIVINITY*. *What's above us* (said he) *does not concern us*. For which he merited the Praise of extraordinary Wisdom, from the mouth of the *Oracle* it self; and he himself was sensible, that it was not for his knowing all things, that *Apollo* had pronounced him the Wisest of all *Greece*; but because he had learn't this one thing, *That he knew nothing*. This therefore is the greatest Wisdom of all, for a Man to confess his own ignorance. Upon this bottom were founded the Opinions of *Arcefilas*, *Carneades* and several

several other *Philosophers* of the *Ancient Academy*, who thought it safest not to determine any thing in Matters of any difficulty. And indeed this modest and doubtful way of *Philosophizing* is the best, seeing it is wariness in the Ignorant, and wisdom in the Learned. It was this, which gain'd so much admiration and esteem to *Simonides*, whose admirable slowness and caution deserves to be propos'd as an Example to be imitated by all Posterity. For being ask'd of *Hiero* what his belief and opinion was concerning the *Gods*, he at first demanded a day to consider of it: The next day after being question'd about the same thing, he desir'd two days more; the third time he crav'd as many more; and so from that time forth he still doubled the number: At which the King standing amaz'd (not being able to guess the reason of so many delays) and pressing him to answer the Question without any further put-offs; *The more* (said he) *O King, that I study and meditate of the Thing you enquir'd of me, the more*
D *obscure*

obscure it grows. Thus (methinks) we ought to leave such things as are intricate and uncertain, undetermin'd, and not boldly give our Verdict in a Matter, wherein the Wisest Men are at a great loss, and use to suspend their Judgments; nor be too forward to resolve and decide Controversies, whilst the ablest and most Learned are yet in doubtful deliberation about them; seeing this is the ready way either to destroy all manner of Religion, or to introduce the most fulsome Superstition and intolerable Slavery.

WHEN *Cacilius* had thus made an end, Well (said he, with a smiling countenance; for the earnestness of his Discourse had appeas'd his Anger) what to all this says our *Octavius* of the Race *Plautus* speaks of, *the chief of Bakers, and the meanest of Philosophers?* Soft (said I to him) you had better spare your bragg, and not begin your triumph till you have got the Victory; nor please your self too much with the fine Speech you have made. Remember that Truth, and not Vain-glory,

is the Thing we contend for. And indeed it is not your Discourse that gives me the greatest trouble (though I must confess that I was extremely taken with it, because it was both very witty and graced with admirable variety) but I am sorry to see, that the probability of Things does change face, according to the abilities and eloquence of those that discourse them, and that the most evident truth often is obscur'd by the weakness of those who manage it. Men are apt to be carry'd away with an Eloquent Speech, and to assent to every thing that is plausibly said, and to be diverted from the consideration of what's treated of, without discerning Truth from Falshood, or considering that as a Paradox may sometimes be true, so a likely thing often is false: And therefore the easier they are to believe the assertions of others, the oft'ner are they reprov'd and convinc'd by those who look nearer into the Matter: So that being nettled at last to see themselves deceiv'd at every turn, they cast the

blame of their own rashness upon the doubtfulness and uncertainty of all things, and had rather condemn every thing and believe nothing at all, than concern themselves in Matters that are so doubtful, and liable to mistake. 'Tis therefore our interest to have a care, lest this should make us have an aversion for all manner of Discourse and Conferences, or (which is worse) make us distast and hate the company of Men. For those who easily believe any thing, finding themselves frequently deceiv'd, by persons whom they before esteem'd honest and good Men, fall into another extreme, which is, That they suspect all the World, and mistrust even those in whom they have reason to repose the greatest confidence. Wherefore since it is so natural for every one to employ all their might in the vindication of their own Opinions, and since also in such Disputes as these, the one has commonly more Truth on his side, though obscure and unperceiv'd, and the other more Wit and Eloquence, even so far as some-
times

times to perswade things that are not; it is our Duty to ponder and consider of the Whole, with all the strictness and exactness imaginable, that we may pick out, approve and receive what's good in it, contenting our selves to commend what is wittily said, without believing it.

YOU transgress the bounds, and keep not the measures of an equal Judge (reply'd *Cæcilius*) by interrupting our Dispute with a Discourse that endeavours to weaken the strength, and take away the credit of what I have said; especially seeing *Octavius* has all the Particulars of my Reasoning whole and entire before him, and may answer and refute them, if he can: And for all your reflecting on my Discourse, if I be not mistaken, I have done nothing but what's for the interest of us both; having endeavour'd only to exhibit a *Compendium* of the Matters in Question between us, to the end that what I have deliver'd, might be examin'd, rather by the force and soundness of Reason, than by any high and pompous

Eloquence. And we ought not any more take off our attention from considering the Things themselves (as you well observe) since our *Januarius* is now preparing and raising himself to take his turn, if we can but have the patience to hear him with silence.

I SHALL speak (said *Octavius*) as much to the purpose as I can. But we must first endeavour to wipe off all injuries, calumnies and reflections, and to dispel those clouds with the light of Truth. To begin therefore, I must first of all tell you plainly, That you have express'd so great an uncertainty about the things you spoke of, that I doubted whether you fail'd in point of Learning or Knowledge, or were blinded by Error. For sometimes you said that you believ'd there were *Gods*; and sometimes again, that you did not know, what to believe of 'em; as if you had a design by your ambiguous Expressions to avoid the dint of my Answer. But I can't think this of *Cæcilius*; These crafty tricks are beneath the greatness of his Wit, and the simplicity

plicity of his temper. But he does like those, who knowing not the way, stop when it divides into many, and are at a loss which to take, because they cannot believe them all right, and dare not chuse any one: In like manner he who hath no firm judgment of Truth, is doubtful and divided in his Opinion about it, according as the reasons on either side do incline and sway him by turns. Therefore it is no wonder if *Cæcilius* also be toss'd to and fro by contrary Opinions. Which that he may no longer be, I will convince him of the Variety of his Errors, by representing Truth to him which is but one, and so settle and establish him for ever. And because he takes it so heinously, that unlearned and poor ignorant people (as he calls us) should maintain any Dispute about *Divine* Matters; he must understand, that all Men are born reasonable Creatures, without any distinction of Age, Quality or Sex, and owe not their Wisdom to *Fortune*, but to *Nature*. Besides, that *Philosophers* and other renowned

known Inventors of Arts and Sciences, were accounted but mean people, illiterate and poor, till their wisdom made them Famous; So true it is, that the Rich who idolize their Treasures, make more account of their Gold, than of Heaven; whereas such poor Fellows as we, have always been the Searchers-out of Wisdom and Teachers of it to others. Whereby we may plainly see, that Wit and Wealth do not always go together; neither is it so much the Effect of great Study and Industry, as an advantage of Nature. Men ought not therefore to quarrel, or be angry, when they see others make it their business to inquire into the truth of *Divine* Mysteries, and declare the understanding they have of them; seeing we ought not to regard so much the Authority or Quality of the Disputer, as the Weight and Truth of what is said. The strength of Reason appears most clearly, when the Discourse is stript of all external Ornaments and Flourishes, not painted and set off with an artificial Grace and Eloquence,

quence, but supported by Truth, which is the Rule of Right and Wrong. Not that I deny, for all that, what *Cecilius* has given himself so much trouble to prove, *viz.* That Man ought to know himself, what he is, from whence, and for what end; Whether he be compounded of the Elements, or made up of Atoms; or rather fram'd, fashion'd, and animated by *GOD* himself. But this we cannot resolve without inquiring into the nature of the Universe, seeing both these things have so near a relation, and are so straitly linked to one another, that we cannot rightly apprehend what Man is, without a diligent enquiry into the nature of the *Deity*; nor be able to manage the civil Affairs of this World, without being acquainted with the constitution of this great City of the Universe. And indeed it being this especially, that makes us differ from Brutes, that whereas they are continually stooping downwards to the ground, looking no higher than their Food; we on the contrary, who have our Faces rais'd upwards

upwards to behold Heaven, and are endued with the use of Speech and Reason, which teaches us to acknowledge *GOD*, to perceive and imitate Him; we cannot without guilt shut our Eyes against this clear Light, which continually glares upon our Senses; it being the highest kind of Sacrilege to seek that on Earth, which is not to be found but in Heaven. And to speak the truth, one must be blind and senseless, to fancy all this great and admirable Fabrick of the World, to have been form'd by a fortuitous concurrence of blind, senseless, and unthinking Atoms, rather than by the unsearchable Wisdom and immense Power of a *God*. For what can be more plain, evident or conspicuous (whether we lift up our Eyes to Heaven, or cast them down to the Earth) than that there is an inconceivably-powerful and wise Spirit, which does inspire, influence, move, cherish, and conduct whole Nature, and every part of it? Do but behold the Heavens; Let your thoughts out into the vastness of their Extension;

Extension; consider the swiftness of their course; view them by night, when they sparkle, and are all bespangl'd with Stars; or by day, when they are all bright and resplendent from the Sun; and you will easily discern the wonderful and *Divine* skill of the Supream Governour in the ordering and poizing of all these. Again, consider how the Sun by his course through the Zodiack measures out the Year, and distinguishes its Seasons, as the Moon does the Months by her increase and decrease. What shall I say of this continual vicissitude of Light and Darkness, which affords us the agreeable and necessary enterchange of Labour and Rest? But I must leave the further discourse of the *Stars* to the *Astrologers*, whose proper business it is to inquire into their Virtues and influences, and who teach us, which of them rule the Winds, and inform the wary Mariner in the Art of Navigation; and which of them determine the time for Plowing and Reaping, and are the perpetual Almanack of the laborious Husbandman.

bandman. From all which it is undeniably evident, that these Wonders could never have been created, fram'd and dispos'd in that excellent Order, without the perfect Wisdom of the Supream *Artist*; seeing we cannot so much as know or understand them, without a great sagacity of mind and reason. What shall we say of that exact Disposal of Time and Seasons, wherein we do not know which we are to admire most, their Constancy or their Variety? How loudly do they proclaim their *Divine* Author, and Wise Director! The *Spring* is not more pleasant by its fair Days and Flowers, than the heat of *Summer* is useful and advantageous to ripen the Fruits of the Earth; and the liberal Plenty of *Autumn* is not more joyful, than the wet and frost of *Winter* is needful. Which Order might easily be disturbed, if it were not dispensed by the steady Hand of *Power* and *Wisdom*. Oh! the Wonders of *Providence*! which has allay'd the nipping frosts of *Winter*, and scorching heats of *Summer*, with the
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intervening temperature of the *Spring* and *Autumn*; and that with such exactness, that the change of these extreams of heat and cold, is so far from being intolerable, that it is even easie and delightful, giving us the pleasure of variety, and yet sliding gently and insensibly from one extremity to another. Cast your eye upon the Sea, and to your amazement you shall see how the loose Banks of Sand give a check to its proud and raging Waves. Consider the wonderful ebbings and flowings of the *Ocean*; Behold the Springs whose waters flow continually; View the Rivers which pursue their uninterrupted course without ceasing, and ever returning to that vast Deep, which is the Center of their Emanation: Take a prospect of those vast Woods and Forrests, which deck and grace the face of the Earth; they are all fed from its bowels, and yet the Earth is never the less. What shall I say of that pleasant and useful disposal of the steepness of Mountains, the risings of Hills, the vast extension of Plains? Or what shall

I say of such numberless numbers of Creatures, who are (each of them) severally furnish'd with their peculiar Weapons of defence ; some are armed with horns, others fenced with teeth ; some strength'n'd with hoofs, others sharp'n'd and edged with claws ; some appointed with stings and spurs, others defended with a prickly and unaccessible skin ; whilst others again secure themselves by the lightness of their heels, or swiftness of their wings ; *Nature* having bestow'd on every one of them either strength or cunning for their own defence ? But above all, the perfection and beauty of the Shape of *Man*, proclaims and owns *GOD* to have been the *Artist* that fram'd it. His upright Stature, his rais'd Countenance, in the upper part whereof the eyes are posted as on a Watch-tower, and where all the other Senses have their several Stations and Quarters allotted them, as in a Castle or Citadel. We should never have done in going about to treat in particular of all these Wonders : There is not one part in *Man*, which

which is not ornamental and graceful, as well as necessary : And what is yet more admirable is, That the same Figure which is common to us all, is diversified by such an infinite variety of Features in each of us, that as there is a likeness in all, so there is in every one something that makes him unlike to another. Besides, how wonderful is the manner of our Birth ? How strong and prevalent the desire of begetting our Like ? Upon whom can you father these Wonders but upon *GOD* alone, who swells the breasts with milk, against the time the Infant breaks his Prison, and comes to breath the free and open Air, suiting their nice tenderness with a proportionate delicate nourishment ? Nor do's this bountiful *GOD* content himself to take a general care of the Universe, but provides also for each part of it. What *Great Britain* wants of the heat of the Sun, is made up by the warm Vapours which arise from the Sea that surrounds it. The overflowing of the River *Nile* serves *Egypt* instead of Rain. *Euphrates* makes *Mesopotamia* fruitful, and the

the River *Indus* is said both to sow and water those *Eastern* Parts. If perchance you should come into a house, and there find all the Rooms richly furnished, beautified and adorned, would you not without the least hesitancy conclude, That there is some Lord and Owner of it, who is far better than all this rich and glorious Furniture ; so likewise in this stately Palace of the World, when you take a view of Heaven and Earth, and that *Providence*, *Order* and *Law*, which dispenseth and directs all things in them, doubt, if you can, that there is a Lord and Father of this great Family, whose Glory far transcends that of the Sun, Moon and Stars, and who is more beautiful than the most lovely part of it. But perhaps, since there is no doubt whether there be a *Providence* or not, you may think it a Question whether there be but one or many, that have a hand in the administration of this Celestial Government, it will not be a hard matter to fix this your uncertainty, if you will but attentively consider the Kingdoms

doms of the Earth, which are but so many Copies of the One Heavenly Original Empire. When did ever a Monarch either admit of a Partner in his Sovereignty, in full trust and confidence, or lay him aside without blood? I omit speaking of the *Persians*, who refer'd the choice of their Prince to the neighing of an Horse ; and purposely pass-by that old Story of the *Theban* Brothers. All the World knows what dissension there arose between two Twins, which of them should be King over a Company of Shepherds, and their poor Cottages. The Wars of *Cæsar* and *Pompey* have spread themselves over the whole World, and the Fortune of so vast an Empire was not big enough to satisfy the ambition of two so nearly ally'd, as Father and Son-in-Law : You may from these instances easily judge of the rest. The Bees can suffer no more than one King ; Flocks follow one Leader, and every Herd has its own Ruler : And can you imagine the Supreme *Power* of Heaven to be divided, and that the Sovereign-

ty of that only true and *Divine Monarchy* is shared amongst many? Especially when you consider, that *GOD*, the Father of all things, has neither Beginning nor End; and as he gives Beginning to all other things, so an Eternity and perpetuity of Being to himself. Who before this World was made, was a World to Himself; who by his Word commanded all things into Being, governs them by his Wisdom, and perfects them by his Power. He cannot be seen, because he is more bright and glorious than our sight can endure to behold: Neither can He be comprehended, being greater than our minds, infinite, immense and only known to Himself; what He is indeed, our breasts are too narrow to conceive; and we can never form a worthy notion of Him, but when we own Him Inestimable and Incomprehensible. May I speak what I think: Whosoever fancies he knows the Greatness of *GOD*, has already lessen'd it; and therefore he who would not lessen it, must not pretend to know it. Neither do thou enquire

enquire after his Name; His Name is *GOD*. 'Tis then we stand in need of Names, when we are to divide a multitude into particulars, by their distinguishing Titles, and proper appellations. But *GOD* being alone and by himself, the Name of *GOD* must wholly belong to Him, and to none else: For if I call Him Father, you'll be apt to think Him an Earthly One; if I call Him King, you'll fancy Him a Worldly Prince; if I call Him Lord, you'll apprehend Him Mortal. Abstract but these additions of Names from our gross imagination, and you'll see Him in his own Brightness and Glory. Besides, in this I have the general assent of all Men, concurring with me. Mind the Common-people; When they lift up their hands to Heaven, whom have they in their mouths but *GOD*? Their ordinary Saying is, *GOD is great, GOD is true*; and ever and anon [*If it pleases GOD:*] Which Words, though they contain the Confession of a *Christian*, yet are as well the Voice of *Nature* in the Common People.

Yea those who will have *Jupiter* to be the Sovereign of the Universe, do only mistake in the Name; but agree with us in the Thing it self, That there is but One only *Power*. The *Poets* also in their Verses celebrate *One Father both of the Gods and Men*; and say, *That the Minds and Thoughts of Men are such as GOD every day puts into them.* And what shall we say of *Virgil*? Does not he speak yet more clearly and more near to Truth, when he saith, *That in the beginning there was a Spirit, which inwardly cherished and foster'd both Heaven and Earth; and that all the Parts of them were actuated by a Mind infused throughout the Whole; and that from thence, Men and all other Creatures derive their Original?* The same *Prince of Poets* calls in another place this Mind and Spirit *GOD*, as where he saith, that *GOD is diffused throughout the vast Extent of the Earth and Seas, and of the high Heaven; and that from Him, Men and Beasts, Rain and Lightning do proceed.* And what do we say else, but that *GOD*

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is an Eternal Mind, Reason and Spirit? Let us take a view, if you please, of the Opinions of *Philosophers*, and you will find that though they seem diverse, yet they all agree in this Matter. And omitting those rude and primitive Men, who by their Sayings purchased the Name of *Sages*; *Thales* the *Milesian*, who was before them all, and who first maintain'd any Dispute concerning Celestial Things, held that Water was the Original Matter of all things, and that *GOD* was that Mind, or Understanding Spirit, who fram'd them out of it: Which is certainly a more profound and sublime Account concerning the Water, and its actuating Spirit, than could proceed from the understanding of Man, without the assistance of *Divine Revelation*. Thus you plainly see that the Opinion of the first of *Philosophers*, does entirely concur with ours. After him *Anaximenes* and *Diogenes Apolloniates* make God to be Air, but Immense and Infinite, and in ascribing these perfections to the Divinity, they also consent with

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us. *Anaxagoras* was of opinion, that *GOD* was an Infinite Spirit, containing and moving all things. *Pythagoras* calls Him a Mind penetrating all things and diffus'd through the Universe, taking care of, and giving Life to all the Creatures therein. *Zenophanes* affirms, That *GOD* is an Animated Infinity, or a Spirit joyn'd with Infinite Matter. *Antisthenes* declar'd, That there were several *Gods*, belonging to several Countries; but that there was but *One* Principal and Sovereign amongst them all, who was *GOD* by Nature. *Spensippus* was of opinion that *GOD* was nothing else but a Natural Power, quick'ning and governing all things. Yea, and does not *Democritus* himself (though he was the first Inventor of Atoms) often call *Nature*, which is the Former of all *Ideas* and Understanding, *GOD*; *Strato* calls Him *Nature*; And even *Epicurus*, who either believed that there were no *Gods*; or if there were, that they were idle, and without any concern about the things of this World;

against Paganism.

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World; yet sets *Nature* above them. As for *Aristotle*, though he seem sometimes divided in his thoughts, about this Matter; yet he positively asserts *One* Sovereign Power: For sometimes he saith, That an Understanding Spirit is *GOD*; sometimes, that the World is *GOD*; and then again, he will have *GOD* to govern the World. *Heraclides* of *Pontus* asserts *GOD* to be a *Divine* Spirit, but with some incertainty; For sometimes he attributes the Supremacy to the *Divine* Spirit, and sometimes to the World it self. *Theophrastus*, *Zeno*, *Chrysippus* and *Cleanthes* do likewise vary in their Opinions; Yet all of them at last agree in *One Providence*, which superintends the Whole. For *Cleanthes* sometimes affirms *GOD* to be a Spirit; sometimes, that He is an *Æthereal* Fire; but most frequently calls Him, Reason. His Master *Zeno* holds a *Natural* and *Eternal* Law, and sometimes *Fire*, and sometimes *Reason*, to be the first Cause of all things. He also evidently reproves and convinceth the common Error about the *Gods*, by shewing that *Juno* is no-
thing

nothing but the Air, *Jupiter* Heaven, *Neptune* the Sea, and *Vulcan* the Fire; And that many of their other *Gods* are but the Elements dress'd up in other Names. *Chrysippus* is much of the same Opinion; for with him, sometimes a *Divine* Power and a *Rational* Nature is *GOD*, and at other times the World, and a fatal Necessity; and imitates *Zeno* in his interpreting the Fables of the *Gods*, which are found in *Homer*, *Hesiod*, and *Orpheus*. In like manner *Diogenes* the *Babylonian* was us'd in his Discourses to declare, That *Jupiter's* Brain being with child and deliver'd of *Minerva*, and other like Stories, were not an account of the true Original of their *Gods*, but of some other things couch'd under those Fables. *Xenophon* the Disciple of *Socrates*, holds, That the shape of the true *GOD* cannot be seen, and consequently is not to be searcht after. *Aristo* of the Isle of *Chios*, says, That he is altogether incomprehensible: Both which *Philosophers*, had doubtless a right sense of the *Divine* Majesty,

in that they despair'd of ever fully understanding Him. As for *Plato*, he does more openly and clearly speak of *GOD*, and does less mistake, both as to the Name and the Thing it self; and his Discourses might have been accounted altogether Heavenly, but that they are here and there blemish'd and tainted with his Politicks. In his *Timæus* he calls *GOD* by his Own Name, and declares Him to be the Father of this Universe, the Creator of the Soul, and the Architect of Heaven and Earth; who by reason of his superlative and incomprehensible Power and Majesty, is hard to be found, and when found; cannot possibly be express'd and declar'd: Which are, in a manner, the very same things which we say; for we also know *GOD*, and own Him to be the Parent of the World; but unless we be demanded, we do not speak publickly of Him.

THUS I have rehears'd the Opinions of almost all the *Philosophers*, whose glory it is, that they have all pointed at *One* and the same *GOD*, though

though under various Names; inso-
much as it would make a Man think,
either that our *Christians* now are
Philosophers, or that the ancient *Philo-*
sophers were *Christians*. Now if it be
granted that *Providence* rules the
World, and is govern'd by the Will
and Counsel of the *One only GOD*;
then ought not we to suffer our selves
to be impos'd upon with the silly Fa-
bles of *Antiquity*, which are both re-
pugnant to Reason, and condemn'd
by the *Philosophers* of ancient Times.
Our Fathers indeed were so credulous,
as to believe things altogether mon-
strous and inconsistent, as a *Scylla* with
several Bodies, a *Chimera* with many
shapes, an *Hydra* that receiv'd a new
life from his happy Wounds, and
Centaures, which were Horse and
Man united and growing together. In
short, they very readily believ'd what-
ever any one was pleas'd to feign or
fancy; as Men's being metamorphos'd
into Birds; Beasts into Men, and a-
gain Men into Flowers and Trees;
with so many other fabulous things,
which

which, had they ever been, would hap-
pen still; but because they cannot be,
are hereby sufficiently demonstrated
never to have been. Their Opinions
concerning the *Gods* were likewise
full of inconsiderate credulity and ig-
norant simplicity; for by giving Re-
ligious Worship to their Kings, and
desiring by Pictures and Statues to pre-
serve their memory, after their Death,
they at last made a Religious Ceremo-
ny of that which at first was only in-
tended to comfort themselves for the
loss of them. For before the World
was open'd by *Commerce* and *Trade*,
and that *Nations* had mixt their *Customs*
and *Ceremonies* together, every one
of them ador'd their first Founder, or
Famous Leader, or some Queen Chast,
and valiant above her Sex; or an In-
ventor of some useful and necessary
Art or Calling; as considering that
the Memory of such Renowned Per-
sons, well-deserved to be preserv'd by
them; since by this means they at once
gave a reward to the Virtue of the De-
ceased, and an example to Posterity.

Read

Read the Writings of Wise-men, and particularly of the *Stoicks*, and you will acknowledge with me, that Men have been worship'd as *Gods*, either for their good Deeds, or their Dignity. *Eubemerus* gives us an exact account of their Birth, Countries and Names, as also the several Places where they were bury'd; particularly he instanceth in *Jupiter* call'd *Diæus*, from the Mountain *Diæ* in *Candia*, where he was nurs'd; and *Apollo* nam'd *Delphicus*, from the City *Delphos* in *Phocis*, a Province of *Greece*; and *Isis*, who had the Sirname of *Pharia*, from the Island *Pharos* in *Egypt*; and *Ceres*, who was styl'd *Eleusina*, from the City *Eleusis* in *Achaia*, where she was more particularly worship'd. *Prodicus* tells us, that they were reckon'd among the *Gods*, who by rambling through the World, were the first Inventors of Husbandry, and by this means became useful to Mankind. And *Persens* discourseth much at the same rate; adding, that it was from this ground, that the Names of the Inventors were bestow'd

stow'd upon the things invented by them, as appears by that Comical Expression [*Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus is a cold*] Which in other terms is no more than this, That *without good Meat and Drink Lust languisheth*. *Alexander* the Great in a famous Treatise which he writes to his Mother, tells her, That the dread of his Power had so far wrought upon a Priest, as to make him discover to him this great Secret and Mystery, that the *Gods* were but Men. In which Discourse he makes *Vulcan* the first of all the *Gods*, and after him the Race of *Jupiter*. Consider the Story of *Isis*, and the scatter'd members and empty Tomb of thy *Serapis* or *Osiris*; and lastly, their Religious Rites and Mysteries, and you'll find them made up of the dismal Events, Deaths, Funerals, Mourning and Wailings of these caitive *Gods*. *Isis* in company of the *Dog's-Head-Idol*, and her bald *Priests*, mourns for, laments and seeks her lost Son, and her miserable Worshipers beat their breasts to express and imitate the sorrow. This unhappy

happy Mother ; and soon after you see *Isis* by and by overjoy'd for having found her Little-One ; her *Priests* are merry, and the *Dog's* snout triumphs for the feat he has done in finding him. Thus they fail not punctually every year to lose what they have found, and then to find again what they have lost. Now I pray you, what can be more ridiculous, than to bewail that which we worship, or to worship that which we bewail ? And yet such fopperies as these, which formerly were the Religion of the *Egyptians*, are now (forsooth) become the Devotions of the *Romans*. *Ceres* with lighted torches in her hands, and Serpents twisting about them, seeks her Daughter *Proserpina*, full of languishing care and trouble, who having stray'd too far, was stoln away and ravish'd by *Pluto*. This is the sum and substance of the *Eleusinian* Mysteries : And the Rites used in the Worship of *Jupiter*, are no less ridiculous. He is suckled by a She-goat, for want of a better Nurse, and the poor Infant is stoln away from his

his Father, for fear he should devour him ; the *Corybantes* in the mean while soundly plying their Cymbals, to drown the cries of the Bantling, from coming to the ears of his more than inhumane Father. I am asham'd to relate the Account they give of *Cybele*, how she gelded *Atys*, and made him an Eunuch-God, because she could not tempt him to commit Adultery with her, who was old and ugly, having been the Mother of so many *Gods*. And therefore, answerably to this Story, her *Priests* voluntarily geld themselves, to the end they might be capable of that Dignity. I leave you to judge, whether these be not real miseries, rather than Religious Mysteries. Come we now to speak of the goodly form, meen and accoutrements of your *Gods* ; than which, what can be more shameful and ridiculous ? *Vulcan* is a limping crazy God. *Apollo*, though he has liv'd so many Ages, is still a beardless Boy ; whereas his Son *Æsculapius* has a fair and comely Beard. *Neptune's* Eyes are blue ;
Minerva's

Minerva's gray; *Juno* has Ox-Eyes; *Pan's* Feet are garnish'd with claws; *Saturn's* are charg'd with fetters, and *Mercury's* fledg'd with Wings. *Janus* has two faces, as if he would go backward and forward at once. *Diana* the Huntress has her Garments tuck'd up to her thighs; but She at *Ephesus*, is in a manner made up all of paps: As she is the Goddess of Hell, they give her three Heads, and good store of Arms and Hands. Yea, your *Jupiter* himself sometimes has a Beard of much gravity, and at other times has a Chin as bare as my hand. When he has the Sirname of *Hammon*, he wears horns; when that of *Capitolinus*, he is arm'd with Thunder-bolts; when that of *Latiaris*, he is all besmear'd with blood; and when that of *Feretrius*, he is very still and quiet. And not to go over the many several *Jupiters*, there being as many Monsters of him, as there are Names. *Erigone* hangs her self; and the Merit of Self-murder hath advanc'd her to shine a perpetual Virgin among the Stars. *Castor* and *Po-*
lux

lux dye and live by turns. *Æsculapius* is struck down with a Thunderbolt, that with the greater Ceremony he may rise up a God: And *Hercules* must burn himself upon Mount *Oeta*, to get rid of his Humanity. These are the fine Stories, which we learn from our ignorant Fore-fathers; and, what is worse, make them the subject of our Studies, and a great piece of Learning. In these the *Poets* excel all others, and have by their Authority done vast prejudice to the Truth; So that *Plato* was much in the right, when he banish'd *Homer* (that renown'd, celebrated and crown'd Poet) out of his Commonwealth. For it is he chiefly, who in his Poem of the *Trojan Wars*, has made a mock of the Gods, by mingling them so familiarly in the actions and affairs of Men. He brings them in fighting together; He wounds *Venus*; He fetters and binds *Mars*, wounds him and puts him to flight: He make *Briareus* to rescue *Jupiter* out of the hands of the rest of the Gods, when they were conspiring to bind him to his good behaviour; and
F and

and represents him lamenting the death of his Son *Sarpedon*, as not being able to prevent it. He describes him embracing his *Juno* with more heat, than he us'd to do his belov'd Mistresses, being inflam'd with *Venus's* Girdle. *Hercules* is made a Scavenger, and cleanseth Stables. *Apollo* turns Cow-herd to *Admetus*. *Neptune* binds himself as a Day-labourer to *Laomedon*, to build up the Walls of *Troy*, and is so unhappy withal, as not to be paid for his drudgery. *Aeneas's* Armour, and *Jupiter's* Thunder-bolt are both hammer'd out upon one and the same Anvil; as if Heaven and its Thunders had not been long before *Jupiter* was born in *Crete*; or as if the *Cyclopes* could have made those affrighting flashes, which *Jupiter* himself could not choose but be afraid of. What shall I say of *Mars* and *Venus*, being caught in the very Fact of Adultery; or of *Jupiter's* abominable filthiness with *Ganymedes*, whom he translated into Heaven? All which Fables were invented on purpose to authorize the faults and vices of Men. And it

is with those and such like pleasing Fictions and Lyes, that the Minds of Youth are corrupted; and being instill'd into them in their tender years, grow up with them to Manhood; So that (which is to be lamented) in their very old Age their Minds continue tainted with these sottish Fancies; And yet the truth of these Matters, is most plain and evident to those who will take the pains to enquire into it. All the Antient Writers (whether *Greek* or *Roman*) do unanimously assert, that *Saturn*, the first of the goodly Generation of *Gods*, was but a Man. This, *Nepos* and *Crassus* do affirm in their History; and *Thallus* and *Diodorus* relate the same thing, viz. That this *Saturn* for fear of falling into his Son's hands, fled out of *Greece* into *Italy*, where *Janus* receiv'd him into his house; and being a *Grecian*, full of ingenuity, and instructed in Arts and Sciences, taught those barbarous people several things; as the forming of the Letters of the Alphabet; coining of Money, and making

making diverse sorts of useful Instruments: He call'd the Country *Latium*, as if he had said, an *Hiding-place*, because he had found there a safe retreat to hide and conceal himself from the attempts of his Son; and to the end he might have his Memory preserv'd, he call'd the City from his own Name *Saturnia*; as *Janus* call'd the City built upon the Hill *Janniculus*, by that Name, to rescue his own from oblivion. You see then plainly, that *Saturn* was a Man; for he was fain to flee and hide himself; and was the Father, as well as the Son, of a Man. And whereas they call'd him the Son of Heaven and Earth, it was only because his Original and Parentage were unknown to the *Italians*; as we are wont to say of those that come unexpectedly upon us, that they are dropt from the Skies; and of such whose birth is mean and obscure, that they are the Sons of the Earth. As for *Jupiter*, he Reign'd in *Crete*, after he had banish'd his Father from that Island; there he begot Children, and there

there he was buried: And at this very day they shew the Cave which bears his Name, and point you to the Grave where he was interred; yea, and the very Ceremonies they use in his Worship, declare him to have been a Man. It would be to no purpose to insist on particulars, and to recount his whole *Genealogy*: It is enough that we have prov'd the Father was Mortal, to convince that the same Quality was convey'd to all his Posterity; except you suppose that they became *Gods* after their Death; as by the Perjury of *Proculus*, *Romulus* was rank'd among the Number of the *Gods*; or as *Juba*, by the unanimous consent and desire of the *Africans*, was made a *God*; and as other Kings were Deifi'd by their Subjects, not because they really believ'd them to be *Gods*, but to give them a more honourable discharge from their Sovereignty. Besides, this extravagant Honour is confer'd upon them against their Wills; they desire to continue Men as they are, and are afraid of being Deifi'd; and though

old, are not at all ambitious of that Glory. Wherefore we are not to look for *Gods* among those that dye, because the *Gods* are Immortal; nor among those who are born, because they are likewise obnoxious to Death. That only deserves the Name of a *Deity* which hath neither Beginning nor End. For if *Gods* were ever born, why are they not so still, except you will say, that now *Jupiter* is too old, and *Juno* past Child-bearing; or that they are of the humour of *Minerva*, who chose to be an old Maid, rather than a Mother? Or indeed have not those pretended *Deities* ceased to procreate, because Men have ceased to believe such Stories? Moreover, if the *Gods* could beget Children, and those Children must needs be Immortal, we should already have had more *Gods* than Men; So that by this time the Heavens would not contain them, nor the Air hold them, nor the Earth bear the vast increase of them. Let us therefore make no difficulty to affirm them to have been Men, of whose Birth

Birth and Death we are so fully assur'd. Neither need any be far to seek for a reason why the common people, notwithstanding all this, do adore and worship these Consecrated Images; their foolish Minds being decoy'd and allur'd by the Curiosity of those Masterpieces of Art, their Eyes dazzled with the lustre of the Gold, and the brightness of the Silver, and polish'd whiteness of the Ivory. But if any body will take time to consider how these Figures are made, and with what Instruments they are carv'd and fram'd, he will blush at his standing in awe of a Material, that has been so abus'd, cut and mangled by the Work-man, before he could make a *God* of it. For if this *God* be of Wood, it may be it is the remnant of a funeral Pile, or Gallows; which they under-prop, cut, plane and make smooth. If it be of Silver or Brass, it may possibly be made of an old Kettle, or something worse; (as it hath often happen'd to one of the Kings of *Egypt*) and then it is molten, beaten, hammer'd and fashion'd

shion'd on an Anvil ; and if of Stone, hew'd, wrought and polish'd (it may be) by some debauch'd and wicked Fellow. Yet is not the *God*, in the least, sensible of all these tortures and indignities, offer'd to him at his Birth, no more than he is afterwards of the Honour, which accrues to him by your Consecration and Worship ; except you will say, that this Stone, Wood or Silver is not yet a *God*. But pray when is it, that the Divinity of it commences ? Behold ! it is melted, fashion'd and grav'd ; but it is not a *God* yet : It is folder'd, put together and set up ; yet still it is no *God* : At last it is adorn'd, consecrated and worship'd ; and then at last with much ado it is a *God*, when it hath pleas'd vain Man thus to dedicate it. But how much more truly do the most contemptible of Animals and Insects, judge your *Gods* ! The Mice, Swallows and Kites know very well, that they have no sense at all ; they tread and pearch upon them, and were they not driven away by you, they would build

build their Nests in their very Mouths ; the Spiders cover their faces with their Cobwebs, and make use of their heads to fasten their threads at. You wipe, cleanse and brush them, and protect the *Gods*, which your selves have made, and yet pretend to fear them. And all this while you don't consider that *GOD* must be known by you, before you can worship Him, and inconsiderately comply with your Fathers Opinions, and choose rather to follow others in their Errors, than credit your own Judgments ; and in a word, know not what that is for which you have such an awe and reverence. Thus by hallowing of *Gold* and *Silver*, you have consecrated *Avarice* ; thus your vain Images come to be stamp'd with the imaginary shape of a *Deity* ; thus the *Roman* Superstition had its rise, and that vast number of *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, wherein there are so many which are silly and ridiculous, and so many which deserve pity and compassion. Some run about the Streets stark naked in the sharpest cold

cold of Winter ; others wear fools-caps, and carry about antick shields in their hands ; others lance their own skins, and lead their blind *Gods* a begging about the streets. They have some Temples which they may not visit but once a year, and others which none may ever enter but the *Priests* alone : Again, they have some that are shut up from Women, and others prohibited to Men. They have some *Ceremonies*, at which a Slave is not permitted to assist, without a great crime. Some of your Statues may not be crown'd but by the hands of a Woman, who hath known but one Man ; others again, only by such as have had to do with many ; and with great devotion you search for the most lewd and common Harlot that is to be found, to officiate at your Holythings. What shall we say of those, who shed their own blood for a Drink-Offering, and by wounding themselves, think to procure the favour of the *Gods*. Were it not better for them to be *Prophane*, than to be thus *Religious* ?

gious ? And do not they also offend *GOD*, instead of appealing Him, who from a strange Superstition geld themselves ; since if *GOD* delighted in *Eunuchs*, he could have made them so, without the assistance of Man's cruelty ? But indeed, who does not see that they are poor distracted and crack-brain'd men, who act these follies ; which have nothing to plead for them, but the multitude of those who are engag'd in the same Error ; as if because this madness is Epidemical, it were therefore lawful and just too ? But you object, that this, which I call Superstition, has given the *Romans* so vast an Empire ; founded it at first, and afterwards rais'd it to that high pitch ; they having been always, rather more famous for their Religion and Piety, than for Prowess and Valour. Well may they boast of the remarkable instances of their Virtue and Justice, from the very Cradle and first beginnings of their Empire ! Was it not their Crimes that associated them at first, and their Cruelty afterwards, that

that made them dreadful to their Neighbours, and laid the first Foundation of their Government? For their Country being a Sanctuary and Place of Refuge for all sorts of Criminals, a great number of Thieves, Traitors, Murderers, Sacrilegious and Incestuous persons were soon gather'd together; and to the end, that he who was their great Captain-General, might excel them all in *Villany*, as he did in *Dignity*, he kill'd his own Brother. These were the auspicious beginnings of this Holy City. Soon after, contrary to the Law of Nature, they steal away Maids already promised, yea betrothed, and Married Women too, from their own Husbands, and force and abuse them; and defend their Crime by warring against their Fathers-in-law, and shedding the blood of their nearest Allies: Than which, what can be thought of more prodigious, more barbarous and as, they presum'd, safe in the confidence of their wickedness? Their next work is, to drive their Neighbours out of their own Countries;

tries; to destroy their Cities, rob their Churches, and defile their Altars; carry them into Captivity, and enrich themselves by Crimes, and the spoils and ruine of others. These were the Maxims and Practice both of *Romulus* and his Successors; So that whatever they have, possess, and worship, is all the purchase of bold Robbery. Their Temples are built and adorn'd with the spoils they have taken in War, that is, with the ruine of Cities, pillage of *Gods* and *Temples*, and slaughter of their *Priests*. What an insolent piece of mockery is this, to establish those Religious *Rites*, you have so horribly prophan'd, and to worship those *Gods*, who were once your Captives? For to pay Adoration to that which you have taken in War, is not so much a consecrating of *Deities*, as an hallowing of *Sacrilege*. Indeed all the Triumphs of the *Romans* were but so many horrid Impieties, and all their Trophies, so many Sacrileges. It is not therefore the Religion of the *Romans*, that has made them so great, as the impunity

impunity of their Villanies. For how can it be thought, that those *Gods* should favour them in their Wars, against whom they took Arms; and which they did not worship, till they had first led them in Triumph? Besides, what could those *Gods* do for the *Romans*, who had not been able to do any thing against them, either in defence of themselves, or their people? For as for their own *Country-Gods*, they are well known what they were. *Romulus*, *Picus*, *Tiberinus*, *Consus*, *Pilumnus* and *Picumnus*, were all Worshipful *Roman Gods*; And besides these, *Tatius* was the first that made and worshipp'd *Cloacina* (with reverence be it spoken) for a *Goddeſs*. *Hostilius* built *Temples* to *Fear* and *Paleness*; and soon after, I don't know who rear'd an *Altar* to the *Goddeſs Ague*. In these Superstitions was *Rome* nurs'd up, and taught to worship Diseases and Indispositions of health! And those two prostitute Harlots, *Flora* and *Acca Laurentia*, whom they rank among their *Divinities*, may very well be reckon'd
also

also among their *Maladies*. And yet these forsooth are the *Gods*, that have enlarg'd the *Roman Empire*, and vanquish'd the *Gods* of other Nations; for it would be madness to suppose, that *Mars* the *God* of *Thracia*, *Jupiter* of *Crete*, *Juno* the *Goddeſs* of *Argos*, *Samos* and *Carthage*; *Diana* of *Ephesus* and *Scythia*, the *Mother* of the *Gods*, and the *Deities*, or rather Monsters, of *Egypt*, should ever help the *Romans* against their own people, who for so many years had been their constant Worshippers. But it may be they were willing to make this Change, because at *Rome* the *Priests* are more Holy, and the Sacred *Virgins* more Chast than any where else? Very likely; when for the most part those have suffer'd the punishment of Incest, who committed it less cautiously; whereas the rest escaped, not by their being less criminal, but by having better hap in the concealing of their lewdness. And as for the *Priests*, where do they play the Whore-masters more, than in the *Temples* and before the *Altars*? Here
they

they exercise the function of Pimps and Panders, and design and contrive Adulteries: Neither does Lust and Debauchery abound so much in the publick Stews, as in their Vestries and Cells. But besides, were there not other great Empires and States flourishing before these Superstitions were invented, or so much as thought-of? As the *Assyrians*, *Medes* and *Persians*, *Grecians* and *Egyptians*, though they had no *Pontifs*, nor that rabble of *Arvales* and *Salii*, *Vestals* and *Augurs*; nor no Chickens religiously penn'd up, from whose feeding, or refusing their Meat, all measures were taken, and the greatest Affairs of State determin'd. But let's come now to those *Auguries* and *Divinations* by the flight or chattering of Birds, which the *Romans* so religiously observ'd, and the neglect or contempt of which (as you took notice) has prov'd as fatal, as the heeding of the same has been fortunate. Was it because the most solemn dancing of the Barley peckt by the Chickens, was not waited for, that the Armies of *Clodius*,
Junius

Junius and *Flaminius* were defeated? But what shall we say then of *Regulus*, who religiously observ'd all these, and yet was taken by the Enemy? and so did *Mancinus*, and for all that, was forced to surrender himself upon dishonourable terms. *Paulus's* Chickens fed heartily at the Battel of *Cannæ*, yet he perish'd, and the greatest part of the Commonwealth with him. And though *Cæsar* made slight of the *Auguries* that forbad him to go into *Africa* before Winter, yet had he a successful Voyage, and return'd Conqueror; so that his contempt of these fopperies did but seem to favour his Passage and Victory. Now as to the *Oracles*, how many things might not I have to say concerning them? *Amphiaraus* after his death foretells future events to others, who when alive could not foresee the treachery of his Wife against him, for a Bracelet of Gold. *Tiresias* the blindman prophesies things to come, and yet is not aware of what is present. *Ennius* in behalf of *Pyrrius* counterfeits the Answers of *Apollo*,
seeing

seeing he was become speechless ; whose wary and ambiguous *Oracle* was silenc'd as soon as Men began to be more wise and less credulous. Thus *Demosthenes* was not afraid to accuse the *She-Priests* of *Apollo* of giving such answers as *Philip* would have her, being well acquainted with those Holy jugglings. But what? Will you then deny that *Oracles* and *Auguries* ever hit the truth? Well, suppose we grant it: Pray what will it avail to the Credit of *Oracles*, if among so many lies one true word has, at a venture, been delivered ; or that *Chance* has, sometimes, imitated *Design*. But give me leave to go back to the Spring, from whence these Errors flow, and discover the Deep, from which such gross darkneses do issue forth. There are certain impure and vagrant Spirits, who being loaden with Earthly pollutions and desires have sunk themselves down to this lower Orbe, from their Original Station: and those miserable wretches having thus lost the Natural advantages wherewith they were created,

ated, and having given up themselves to all manner of Vices, they endeavour to comfort themselves under this calamity, by bringing others into the same misery ; for as they have corrupted themselves, so do they delight in nothing more than to corrupt others ; and as they have separated themselves from GOD, so do they their utmost endeavours by false ways, Religions and Superstition, to keep Mankind estranged from Him. These *Spirits*, the *Poets* acknowledge to be *Demons* ; concerning whose Nature the *Philosophers* maintain several Disputes ; and they were very well known to *Socrates*, who had one of them always attending him, according to whose intimations, he either undertook or declin'd all business. The *Magicians* also are very well acquainted with this sort of *Spirits*, by whose help they do all those strange Feats, and Juggling tricks, by which they make us believe, we see that which is not, or not to see, that which really is ; and in a word atchieve to our

great amazement all those extraordinary and astonishing Wonders that are spoken of. Nevertheless *Hostanes*, who was the *Chieftest* of all these *Magicians*, both in word and deed, gives *GOD* the Honour due to Him, and says that the Angels are his Ministers and Messengers, who adore Him with fear and trembling; To which he adds, that the *Demons* are Earthly and Vagabond *Spirits*, that hate Mankind. And *Plato*, who found it a hard matter to know *GOD*, did not find it so, to know them. He speaks both of *Demons* and *Angels*, and in his *Dialogue* call'd the *BANQUET*, he endeavours to explain the Nature of the former; saying, That they are of a *Middle* substance between *Mortal* and *Immortal*, that is, between a *Body* and *Spirit*; being made of a mixture of Terrestrial grossness, and Celestial purity. By which means they have an easie access to us, to stir up our desires, and by conveighing themselves into our hearts, to affect our Senses, raise our Passions, and kindle in our
Souls

Souls the flames of Lust. These *Dæmons* then, who are mix'd and impure *Spirits*, as we have plainly demonstrated by the Authority of *Wisemen*, *Philosophers*, and *Plato* himself, lurk privately in those Statues and Images, which are consecrated unto them; and by their *Enthusiasms* get so great an Authority over the minds of men, as of present *Deities*; and this, by inspiring their *Prophets*, dwelling in their Temples; by animating and acting the Entrails of Beasts; by directing the flying of Birds, determining of Lots, and uttering *Oracles*, which are generally obscure, and mixt with abundance of lyes; for they both deceive others, and are deceiv'd themselves; who as they do not know the Truth fully, so they oft conceal, and will not confess that which they do know, because it tends to their own shame and confusion. Thus they make it their business to depress, and sink us downwards from Heaven to Earth, and to estrange us from *GOD*, by immersing us into Matter; They
G 3 trouble

trouble and disquiet our life, molest us with Dreams; and this by the advantage they have, as *Spirits*, to convey themselves into our Bodies; where they counterfeit Diseases, terrifie our Minds, distort our Members, thereby to oblige us to adore them; and that after they are glutted with the reaking steam of Altars, and the blood of slain Beasts, by undoing their own Charms, the honour of Healing might be attributed to them. They are these very *Spirits*, which act those raging mad folks, whom you see running along the streets, and who are every whit as much *Prophets*, as those who give answers in your *Temples*; for they both foame, rage, and are whirl'd about alike: Indeed they are *Dæmons* which possess the one, as well as the other, with this only difference, that the object of their madness does vary. From the same also proceed all those delusions, you even now rehears'd, as that of *Jupiter's* commanding in a Dream that his Games should be restor'd; the appearance of *Castor* and *Pollux*, on Horse-

Horseback, and that of a Ship being tow'd along by the girdle of a *Roman* Matron. The most now adays, and among them many of your own Party, know very well, that the *Devils* themselves do oft confess all these things, when by the torture of our Words, and the Fire of our Prayers, they are driven out and dispossest'd. Then it is that *Saturn*, *Serapis* and *Jupiter* with all the Crew of *Gods* you worship, being overcome with anguish, do declare plainly what they are; nor have they the power by lying, to conceal their own shame (as you may be sure they fain would) though some of their deluded Adorers be present. Sure you will credit the testimony of your own *Gods*, when they witness the Truth against themselves, and confess they are Devils. For when those Wretches are conjur'd to come forth by the Name of the *True* and *Only* GOD, they tremble and quake within the Bodies they have possess'd, and either leap forth presently, or vanish by degrees, according as the Faith of the

Patient, and Grace of the Ghostly Physician are stronger or weaker; So that they dread the nearness of those *Christians*, whom at a distance, by your means, they trouble and disturb in their Assemblies; and to that end insinuate themselves into the hearts of the simple and ignorant, and there sow the seeds of hatred against our Religion: For nothing is more natural, than to hate those whom we dread, and give all the trouble we can, to those of whom we stand in awe. So they prepossess and prejudice the hearts of men against us, that they begin to hate us, before they know us; lest knowing us, without this prejudice, they might desire to imitate, or at least not be able to condemn us. Now how unjust it is to pass a Judgment upon things which one knows not, as you do in condemning us, you may take warning from us, who do so heartily repent for having committed the same fault; for we were once as you are, and had the same Sentiments, being involv'd in the same blindness and

and stupidity of Error, when we believ'd that the *Christians* worship'd Monsters, devour'd Children, defil'd their Feasts with Incests; without considering, that though such things were commonly reported, yet they never were prov'd, and that none all this while has ever confess'd the least tittle of any one of these Crimes, though besides the assurance of Pardon, the reward of such a discovery might have been a great temptation thereunto. Indeed to be a *Christian*, is so far from implying any thing that is evil or criminal, that they who are convict, never blush at it, nor fear the punishment which attends it: No, you see them glory in it, and troubled at nothing but that they were so no sooner. Nevertheless we our selves, at the same time when we undertook the Defence of *Parricides*, and persons guilty of Sacrileges and Incest, would not so much as hear the Plea that *Christians* were ready to make for themselves, whom we sometimes made endure a cruel torture, not out of hatred, but pity, forsooth,

forsooth, that by constraining them through the greatness of torments to renounce their Religion, we might save their lives. Oh! perverse Inquisition, to make use of the Rack, not to force the sufferer to declare the Truth, but to deny it. Now if it so happened that any one, less constant, being overcome with the pains of those tortures, did renounce his Religion, he was received into favour, as if by such an abjuration, he had made atonement for all the Crimes, which are commonly charg'd upon them. By which you may plainly see, that we formerly were of the same mind and persuasion with you, doing the very same things as you do now. But indeed, had you been govern'd by *Reason*, and not by the instigation of *Evil Spirits*, your business would have been to have urg'd the *Christians* not to renounce their Religion; but to confess their Incests, Whoredoms, impious Ceremonies, and their Sacrificing of Infants; which are the fabulous Stories wherewith the same *Demons* have fill'd the silly people's

ple's Minds, to make them detest and abhor us. But no wonder if all these horrid lyes and Fictions do vanish away before the appearance of Truth, which those Monsters so much oppose, making it their business to spread and foment false reports. From these also that Fable had its rise, That we worship an *Ass's* Head. But, I pray you, who can be conceiv'd so much a fool, to worship such a thing; or rather, who is so much a fool as to believe we do it, except those who are guilty of as extravagant and impious Devotions themselves? For indeed it is you make both *Asses* and Stables Holy, by having consecrated your *Goddess Hippona*, and given her the Charge over them; and when you celebrate the solemn *Rites* of your *Goddess Isis*, you, with a great deal of Ceremony, adorn that *Animal*: Yea, you pay Adoration to the heads of *Oxen* and *Rams*; so that you *Worship* the same Beasts, which you *Sacrifice*. Some of your *Gods* are made up of a mixt shape of *Goats* and *Men*, and others of them have

have the Heads half of *Dogs* and half of *Lions*. Don't you with the *Egyptians* worship and feed an *Ox* under the Name of *Apis*? Neither do you disavow the worship of their other goodly *Deities*; as *Serpents*, *Crocodiles*, and other *Beasts*, *Birds* and *Fishes*; so that it is accounted *Capital*, to kill any one of these *Gods*. Are there not a great many amongst you, who with the *Egyptians*, stand as much in awe of the biting sharpness of an *Onion*, as of their *Goddeſs Isis*, and are as much afraid of the noise of breaking wind backward, as of their *God Serapis*? As for such as accuse us of adoring the privy Parts of our *Priests*, they do but charge us with their own Villanies; for such filthy Devotions are very suitable to those debauched and lewd people, among whom 'tis but too common for both Sexes, to prostitute all their Members, and who give the name of Courtesie and kindness to the most extravagant Obscenity and Lasciviousness; who envy the liberty of Strumpets, and commit such unnatural filthiness with

with one another, as no modest Tongue can express, or Pen set down; and who sooner grow weary, than ashamed of their impudent lasciviousness. Oh horrible lewdness! They willingly suffer those things to be committed upon themselves, which neither tender age is able to bear, nor the basest of slaves will yield to. As for our part, we are so far from being guilty of such filthy actions, that we do even blush at the bare recital of them; and indeed, I should think my self to transgress the bounds of Civility, should I insist any longer upon this Matter, though it be in order to defend our Religion. For really you accuse us, who are Chast and Modest, of such Crimes, as we could not have believed there had been such, had there not been the proofs of them from among your selves. As to that which you say, that we worship a wicked Person and his Cross, you are greatly mistaken; for how could he have deserv'd to be worshipp'd, had he been an Evil-doer; or to be believ'd a *GOD*, had he been only

only Earthly? He is surely very miserable, who reposes all his confidence in a mortal man, since all hopes of his help dye with him. The *Egyptians* indeed are guilty of this folly, who chuse a Man for the Object of their Worship, whom they pray unto; consult upon all occasions, and to whom they offer Sacrifice. But all this while, whether he will or no, he that is a *God* to others, is but a *Man* to himself, and though he may deceive others, he cannot deceive his own Conscience. Upon Kings and great Persons also base flattery has bestow'd the Title of *Gods*; whereas it had been enough to have paid them their due honours; though to speak the truth, Honour is properly due only to those who are eminently deserving, as Love is to excellently good Men. Thus they invoke these Divine Powers, they pray before their Images, implore the help of their *Genii*, that is, their *Dæmons*, and hold it a less Crime for a Man to be perjur'd when he swears by *Jupiter*; than when he swears by the

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Emperor's *Genius*. We neither worship Crosses, nor wish to be nail'd to them. You your selves are more likely to adore them, who worship Wooden *Gods*, that are made of the same Matter. And what are your Banners and Standards, but gilt and beautified Crosses? Nay, the very Trophies of your Victories do not only bear the figure of a Cross, but of a Crucified Man. Indeed the Sign of the Cross is naturally represented in many things, as in a Ship, when under Sail, or when row'd with Oars; also when a Man prays to *GOD* with his hands stretch'd forth, he makes the same Figure; So that the Figure of the Cross, has both a ground in *Natural Reason*, and in your *Religion*, as being form'd in the most Solemn action of it, Prayer.

NOW I would fain meet with that Man, that says, or believes, that the blood of a murder'd Infant, is the initiating *Ceremony* of our Religion. First, who could have the heart to shed the blood of a young Innocent, that

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is but newly born? Surely none can imagine or believe such a Crime, but he who can commit it. 'Tis you that expose your Children, new-born, to wild Beasts and Birds, and strangle them at their coming into the World: Nay, there are some among you, who by taking Potions, to cause abortion, destroy them in the Womb, and are guilty of their death, even before they are born. Which cruelty you have learned of your *Gods*; For *Saturn* was not contented to expose his own Children, but devour'd them himself: Upon which account they were us'd in some parts of *Africa* to offer him such little Infants, whom they prevented from crying, by stopping their mouths with kisses, that they might not sacrifice sad and mournful Victims to their *Gods*. It was also a Custom among the *Scythians*, to sacrifice Strangers that lodg'd with them; which a King of *Egypt* also practis'd. The *Gauls* sacrificed humane, or rather inhumane, Offerings to *Mercury*. The *Roman* Priests have upon some occasions overwhelm'd and
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buried a *Grecian* Man and Woman, as likewise a Man and Woman of *Gaul*, alive: And at this day the solemn Worship paid to *Jupiter Latiaris*, is cutting of a Man's throat; which, indeed, very well becomes *Saturn's* Son, thus to gorge himself with the blood of a Criminal. From whence, I suppose, it was, that *Catiline* learn'd to ratifie his Conspiracy with humane blood; and that *Bellona* does still oblige those to drink a draught of it, who consecrate themselves to her service. With which bloody Medicine, a thousand times worse than the Disease, the Falling-sickness is also cured. Nor are they much less barbarous, who from the Amphitheatre take and eat wild Beasts, all besmear'd with blood, and newly fed with the flesh and entrails of Men. For our part, it is not lawful for us, either to see or hear of Murthers committed; and so much do we abhor Humane blood, that we eat not even that of Beasts. As for our incestuous and promiscuous Feasts, it is a Calumny invented at a consultation of Devils, on
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purpose to obscure the glory of our Chastity, and deter Men from our Religion, before they had try'd it, by the horror of so great a Crime; and what your *Orator Fronto* has said concerning it, is rather an *Invective* than an *Evidence*. But, really, it's your selves, that are guilty of Incests, and not we. The *Persians* marry their own Mothers; the *Egyptians* and the *Athenians*, their Sisters. Your Stories and Tragedies, wherein you take so much delight, boast of Incests; and so you worship *Gods*, who have committed Incest with their own Mothers, Daughters, and Sisters. 'Tis therefore no wonder that that Vice is so frequent and fashionable amongst you, since your very *Gods* are your encouraging Examples and Complices. And indeed, it is no strange thing, if oft at unawares you commit Incest, by your whoring indifferently every where, and by exposing your Children to the mercy of others; so that it cannot well be supposed, but that you sometimes light upon them. Thus you see that whilst you accuse us of feign'd

feign'd Incests, you are guilty of real ones your selves. But *Christians* are not wont to make an outward shew of their Chastity; but enshrine it in their Minds, and do not study so much to seem chaste, as to be really so. All of us have either one only wedded Wife, or no Woman at all. As for our *Feasts*, they are not only Chaste, but Sober; for we do not spend our time in over-charging our stomachs with Meat and Drink; but we temper the joys of our Feasts with the gravity and seriousness of our Conversation. And as we are thus Chaste in our Assemblies, so are we no less such every where else. There are many amongst us, who keep themselves undefil'd and holy in an unmarried state, without boasting of it; and we are so far from being incestuous persons, that some of us are even ashamed of lawful pleasures. As for what concerns Honors, it doth not follow, that because we decline your Purple and Dignities, that therefore we are of the dregs of the people; nor are we to be account-

ted Factious, if we all aspiring after the same felicity keep company with one another, and all meet together as peaceably as we behave our selves singly and alone. Nor ought we to be accus'd for prating in corners, if you be either asham'd or afraid to hear us in publick. And if our Number daily increases, it is not our Crime, but our Commendation; an excellent course of life, is not only apt to engage those who are enter'd into it to persevere and continue in it, but to invite and allure others to it. We do not know one another by any marks we have on our bodies, as you fancy; but by our modesty and innocency. That we love one another so entirely, as you are troubled to see it, is, because we know not how to hate. And that we call one another *Brethren*, which you envy us for, is, because we have all *One* and the same *Father*, one and the same *Faith*, and one and the same *Hope*. But for your part, you do not owne one another; you rage with envy and hatred against one another; and the

the only sign of your Brotherhood is Parricide, and your frequent imbruing your hands in the blood of your nearest Relations. But you suppose, that we conceal *That* which we worship, because we have neither *Temples* nor *Altars*. To what purpose should we make any form or representation of *GOD*, whose living Image, Man himself is? Or what *Temple* should we raise to *Him*, since this whole *World*, which was made by Him, is not able to contain Him? Or shall we Mortals, who live in great Palaces, confine the Incomprehensible *Glory* of *HIS MAJESTY*, to the narrow compass of some *Temple* or *Chappel*? Were it not much better to dedicate our *Mind* for the place of his *Abode*; and consecrate our *Heart* for his *Altar*? Shall we offer to *GOD* Sacrifices and Oblations of such Creatures, as he has made for our use? Would not this look indeed as if we had a mind to reject his Bounty, and to throw back his Gifts into his own Hands; which speaks the greatest ingratitude, especially since the only ac-

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ceptable Offering to him, is a good Mind and a pure Heart, with a sincere Conscience. So that he that lives innocently, prays to *GOD* acceptably; he that deals justly, presents *Him* with an Offering of a sweet savour; he who abstains from fraud, doth most effectually propitiate and atone the *Deity*; and he that rescues a Man that is in danger of his life, does kill the fattest Sacrifice. These are our Sacrifices; these are our Mysteries; and with us, he is most Devout and Religious, who is most Just. But you wonder, that we neither can shew to others the *GOD* whom we Worship, nor see him our selves. Does this seem strange to you? Why, for this very reason we do most assuredly believe *Him* to be *GOD*, because we can perceive *Him*, but cannot see *Him*. For his omnipotent *Virtue* and *Power* is always present before our eyes, in the Works which he has made; and in the whole course of *Nature*; when it thunders, when it lightens, when it is fair; all his works proclaim *Him*: Let it not therefore seem

seem strange to you, that you do not see *GOD*. All things are mov'd and driven by the Wind, and yet you see it not; And the Sun it self, that makes all things to be seen, is in a manner invisible, by reason of its superlative and dazling brightness; insomuch as should we gaze long, and stedfastly fix our eyes on it, it would blind them, and put them out. And canst thou think thy self able to bear the sight of his Glory, who made the Sun, and is the *Fountain* of all *Light*, when thou art afraid of his *Lightnings*, and hidest thy self from his *Thunder*? Besides, wouldst thou see *GOD* with thy Eyes of flesh, when thou canst neither see nor take hold of thine own Soul, by which thou dost live and speak? But perhaps you will say, *GOD* is ignorant of what we do, and *He* being in Heaven, can neither consider all, nor take knowledge of every particular person and his concernments. How greatly are you mistaken? For how can *He* be far from any of us, when all things in *Heaven* and *Earth*,
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and in the immense space beyond them, are full of *Him*, and known to *Him*. *He* is not only with us, but within us; And as the *Sun*, though fixed in the *Heavens*, yet diffuses it self through the whole *Universe*, is present every where, and mingles its light with every thing, without staining its brightness; so with much more reason, can *nothing* be hid from, or secret to *GOD*, the *Author* and *Beholder* of *all things*; the *Darkness* hides not from *Him*, for *He* is there also; nor the *thoughts* of *Men*, which are the truer *Darkness* of the *two*. We live not only under His *Governance*, but, as I may say, with *Him*. Neither ought we to presume upon our great Numbers, as supposing that one may easily escape unseen among so vast a Multitude; For though we may seem to our selves a great many, yet are we but a few with respect to *GOD*. We, indeed, divide and distinguish the *Earth* into *Countries* and *Nations*; but to *GOD* this whole *World* is but one *House*. *Kings* cannot acquaint themselves with the State and
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Concerns of their own *Kingdoms*, without the Eyes of many Ministers; but the *MONARCH* of the whole *World* needs none to inform *Him*; we being not only under his Eye, but even in his *Bosom*. You say, it avail'd nothing to the *Jews*, that they worshipped *One Only GOD*, with *Temples*, *Altars*, and a vast Number of *Ceremonies*; but in this you mistake through ignorance, if either not remembring, or not knowing the History of former times, you take notice only of some latter Events: For whilst they ador'd our *GOD* holily, religiously and innocently. (I say *Our GOD*, for the same is the *GOD* of the whole *World*) whilst they obey'd his *Just Commands* and wholesome *Laws*, they became of a small Number, a mighty Nation; of *poor*, they were made *rich*, and from a state of *Slavery*, arriv'd to a most puissant *Monarchy*: A few of them, and unarm'd, put to flight great Armies and overthrew them, the Elements at *God's* command fighting for them. Look into their own Writings, or if it like
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you better, into those of the *Romans*; read what *Josephus* and *Antonius Julianus* (not to mention those Historians that were before them) write of that *People*, and you'll find, that their Sins drew down Calamities upon them, and whatever Evils befell them, were long before prophesied would overtake 'em, in case they should still continue in their Rebellion: So that indeed they forsook *GOD*, before they were forsaken of *Him*, and were not (as you impiously say) taken Captives with their *GOD*, but given up by *Him*, as deserters of his Discipline and Law.

AS to what concerns the general Conflagration of the Universe, it is a vulgar Error, to think it a thing difficult or impossible that the World should all on the sudden be set on fire, and consum'd by that means. There is no man doubts, but that which has a Beginning must have an End, and that that which is made, must finally perish; That the Heavens themselves, and all things therein contain'd, as they

they had a Beginning, must likewise have an End; and that ceasing to be nourish'd by the exhalations of fresh and salt-waters, they will be inflam'd; for so the *Stoicks* stedfastly believe, that all the moisture of *Nature* being spent, the whole World will presently take fire: And the *Epicureans* are likewise of the same Opinion, as touching the ruin of the Universe, and the Conflagration of the Elements. As for *Plato*, he saith, That some parts of the World are at times drown'd with floods and inundations, others consum'd by fire; and though he said that it was made so at the first, as that it might continue for ever; yet he adds, that *GOD*, *Who* is the *Maker* of it, may destroy it when *He* pleases. Which is not at all to be wonder'd at, that a Workman can, and may take to pieces his own Work. So that herein you see the *Philosophers* do fully agree with us; not that we do follow their steps, but they have taken some shadow of this Truth out of the predictions of our *Prophets*, and have fourbish'd and dress'd

dress'd it up after their own way. Thus also the most renown'd amongst them, first *Pythagoras*, and especially *Plato*, have deliver'd down to us, though very much corrupted and maimed, the Doctrine of another Life after this; for they assert, That the Souls of Men after the dissolution of their bodies, do perpetually remain, and are continually passing into new Bodies; and perverting the Truth still more, they add, That the Souls of Men do return into the bodies of Beasts and Birds; an Opinion which does more beseeem a *Mountebank* or *Juggler*, than a grave *Philosopher*. But it is enough for us, that your *Wisemen* themselves do in some sort agree with us. And who is so much a fool, as to deny, that *He* who at first made Man, can as easily restore and renew him? For as he is nothing after Death, so neither was he any thing before Life; And therefore why should we think it strange, that he who at the beginning was made of nothing, should of nothing (as to us) be repair'd and recover'd

ver'd to a new Life; especially since it is much more difficult to create a thing which never was, than to restore that to its former Being, which has already been? Or do you believe, that every thing which disappears to our dull sight, does perish in the sight of *GOD*? Whether the Body moulder into dust, or be dissolv'd into water, or be reduc'd to ashes, or be attenuated into Steam and Air, it is only withdrawn out of our sight, but to *GOD* it is preserv'd in the several Elements into which it is chang'd. Neither do we fear, as you fancy, that any manner of prejudice comes to our Bodies by Burial; only we observe the Custom of interring Dead Bodies, as the best. Do but look about you, and you'll see how, to our comfort, whole *Nature* is a lively Pourtraiture and Representation of our *Resurrection*. The Sun rises and sets, and so do the Stars; Flowers dye and spring up again; Trees renew their green Vesture every year; and Seeds, unless they dye and putrifie in the Earth, do not

not return to a new life. And why may not our Bodies, like Trees in Winter, hide and preserve their life and vigour, under a seeming withering and deadness? Indeed, you cannot expect to see this in the depth of Winter, but must stay till that great Spring comes, which shall make our Bodies to flourish and live again. Nor am I ignorant that there are very many, who being sensible of their own demerits, do rather wish, than believe, that they shall not be after Death; chusing of the two, rather utterly to be extinguish'd, than to be restor'd to life again, only to be punish'd; which Error encreases daily, by reason of the extreme licentiousness of the Age, and the long forbearance of *GOD*, whose Judgments the slower they are, by so much the more justly and heavily are they laid on at last. And yet Men are told both by the Writings of *Wisemen* and *Poets*, that there is a *Stygian Lake*, and an ever-burning River, prepar'd for the Eternal punishment of the Wicked, according to the Oracles
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of true *Prophets*, as well as the discoveries of the *Demons* themselves. Hence it is the *Poets* make *Jupiter* to swear by the burning Rivers, and dark Deep; for as he foresees the torments design'd both for himself and his worshippers, so does he fear and tremble at them, as being without measure, and without end. For in wonderful wise this Fire does both consume our Bodies and repair them, devour and nourish them at once; like the flashes of *Lightning*, which blast and kill the body without consuming it; or those *Vulcano's* of *Ætna* and *Vesuvius*, and others that burn continually, without wasting or going out. Thus this infernal penal Fire is strangely fed, without diminution of its Fewel, and preys for ever upon the Bodies of the Damn'd without wasting them. Now, that *GOD* doth deservedly punish them that know him not, impious and wicked men, none but prophane Wretches can deny, since it is scarce a less heinous Crime, not to know the *Father* and *Lord* of all things, than to provoke

voke and affront *Him*. And although the Ignorance of *GOD*, is enough to make Men lyable to punishment, as the true Knowledge of *Him*, doth avail for their Pardon and Indemnity; yet if we *Christians* be compar'd with you, notwithstanding that upon some of us our Discipline hath less effect, we shall be found much the Better Men. For you forbid Adulteries, and commit them; whereas we are known as Men, to our Wives alone. You content your selves only to punish the outward *Act*; whereas with us the very *Thought* of Evil is a Crime. You are afraid that other men should be conscious of your faults, but we stand in awe even of our own Consciences; because we cannot fly nor hide our selves from them. The Prisons are crouded with numbers of your own, but you find not one *Christian* there, except he be either a *Confessor*, or an *Apostate*? Neither let any think to comfort himself with this, That all Humane Actions are subject to unavoidable *Fate* and *Destiny*: For though

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we attribute some Events to *Chance*, yet it is undeniably certain, that the Mind of Man is free in the choice of his Actions, which are therefore only punishable and not his Condition. What is Fate, but what *GOD* has spoken and decreed concerning every one of us, who being able to foresee the Matter of His own Decrees, suits them to every ones deserts and circumstances; so he punishes in us, not the Destiny of our Nativity, but the ill disposition of our Minds? But no more of this Matter for the present; which if it be not sufficient, we may have occasion to treat of it more amply another time. Only let me observe to you now, that if we are poor, which you are (continually upbraiding to us) this is not a reproach, but an Honor to us; for as the Mind is apt to grow dissolute by Luxury and Excess, so is it many times confirm'd in Virtue, by Frugality and a mean Estate. And yet how can he be poor who lacks nothing, who covets nothing that others have, and who is rich towards *GOD*? He indeed is

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rather poor, who having much, still covets more: And to speak my mind freely, no man is so poor by Fortune, as we are all by Nature. The Birds have no Patrimony to live upon, and the Cattel upon a thousand hills are provided for only from day to day; and we live upon these who have nothing certain to live upon, for they are all made for us, and we possess them all, if we covet them not. Therefore as he that travels on the road, is most easie when he carries least about him; so in this journey of life he is happiest who being eas'd by Poverty, doth not go sighing under the weight and burthen of Riches, which if we thought needful for us, we might lawfully beg them of *GOD*, who, no doubt, would not deny us something of that *ALL* which is *His*: But we chuse rather to despise riches, than possess them. Our most earnest *Wishes* are for *Innocence*; our most fervent *Prayers* for *Patience*; we had much rather live well and vertuously with a little, than prodigally and luxuriously with

with a great Estate. When we undergo the troubles of this Life, and suffer the infirmities of our Nature, we don't so much account them pains and punishments, as a warfare in which we are engaged: For we find that our courage gains strength from our infirmities, and that calamities and afflictions are the usual Discipline of Vertue; it being certain that the vigour of our Bodies, as well as our Minds, is apt to decay for want of exercise. Thus all those great Men, whom you magnifie as such Examples of Vertue, became Famous no other way, but by the miseries and calamities they were exercis'd withall. Neither is it therefore a good consequence from our seeming forlorn condition, to say that *GOD* neglects us, or is unable to relieve us; *He* who is the great Governour of all, and the most compassionate *Lover* of his *Own*. But *He* proves us by adversities; *He* makes tryal of our temper and disposition by dangers and sufferings; *He* sifts our most hidden thoughts and inclinations; and to discover the bent of our

wills

wills to the utmost, *He* calls us to suffer death for *Him*, being well assured that nothing can perish in his hands, and miscarry under his care. In short, as men try *Gold* by fire, so does he refine *us* by afflictions. And indeed how delightful a Spectacle must it be to *GOD*, to see a Christian courageously encountering his pains, and undauntedly preparing himself for all manner of threats, punishments and torments ; to see him boldly look Death and the Executioner of it in the face, and without the least alteration, to throw himself into the devouring flames ; to see him assert his liberty against Kings and Princes, and to yield to none but *GOD*, whose *He* is ; in a word, like a Conqueror, to triumph over his Judg ; for he is really victorious, who has obtained what he strives for? Where is the Souldier that would not boldly provoke and challenge dangers in the presence of his General, knowing that none but such as give good proof of themselves, shall be rewarded? And yet a General cannot give what he

he has not ; I mean, he cannot lengthen our days, though he may bestow Honors upon us for our Courage and brave Exploits. But the Souldier of *JESUS CHRIST* is so far from being abandon'd, even in Death it self, that he triumphs over it, and leads it Captive : So that though he may seem to be miserable, yet he cannot be so. You your selves exalt, even to the Skies, such as have courageously suffer'd for their Country ; Witness *Mutius Scaevola*, who being mistaken in his attempt upon the King, had certainly been put to death by his Enemies, had he not, by a most undaunted courage, burnt off his own right hand before their eyes, upon the Altar. And how many are there amongst us, who without the least shreaking or crying out, have endur'd, not only to have their right hands, but their whole bodies consum'd to ashes, when they might with one word have deliver'd themselves from those extreme tortures? But why do I compare our Men with *Mutius* and *Aquilius* and *Regulus*?

Our very Women and Children make flight of crosses and tortures, are unconcern'd at the sight of wild and venomous Beasts; and in a word, by a Patience divinely inspir'd, make a mock of torment in all its frightful shapes. And yet so miserably blind are you, as not to consider that there are none who will either endure torments without cause, or can be so courageous under them, without a supernatural and *Divine Assistance*. But this is that which perhaps deceives you, That you see those who know not *GOD* to abound in *Riches*, flourish in *Honor* and excel in *Power* and *Dignity*. Poor Wretches! They are lifted up on high, that they may have the greater fall; They are Beasts fatten'd for Sacrifice, and so many Victims crown'd before their Slaughter; so that one would think, seeing their lewd Lives, that they are set upon Thrones, only to abuse their Power, and to sin with more licentiousness. Besides, without the knowledge of *GOD* there can be no solid Felicity,

since

since all the things of this World are like a Dream, which vanishes before we can lay hold of it. Kings feel as many fears in themselves, as they cause in others, and though they are guarded with a great retinue, yet they are alone in dangers. You are rich (it's true) but it is not well to trust inconstant *Fortune*. Besides, if things be rightly consider'd, so much Luggage, for so short a Journey is more cumbersome than useful. You glory in your *Purple* and *Dignities*; but without cause, since Scarlet and rich Vestments are but a pitiful Ornament to you, if your Souls be tainted with Sin and polluted with Vice. You pretend to be of a great *Family* and of Noble *Parentage*: But don't you know that we are all Equal by our Birth, and that Virtue only ought to make the difference among Men. It is therefore with good reason that *Christians*, who aim at being esteem'd only upon the account of their Virtuous Manners and Modest Behaviours, despise your Shews and Poms, and fly from them as de-

lightful

lightful Inticers and Corrupters of men; and with the same reason also they abstain from your Religious *Worship* and *Ceremonies*, as well knowing what was their Beginning and Original. For who can but abhor to hear and see those confused Contests and Shouts of the Multitude at your Chariot-races? What sober Mind is not astonish'd to see the Art of killing Men, publicly profess'd in your *Gladiators* Games? And for your *Theaters*, as the madness there is no less, so they exceed in all manner of infamous lewdness and filthiness; where a bold and shameless Actor represents or relates Adulteries, and the lascivious Jester by making Love, incites to Lust and Lasciviousness; where they dishonor your *Gods* by ascribing sighs and hatred, and Whoredoms, the Passions and the Vices of men to them. With feigned griefs they draw real tears from your eyes; so that you can lament personated Murthers, and take delight in true ones. If we abhor the remainders of your *Sacrifices*, and of the
Wine

Wine that has been presented upon your *Altars*, this is not to be interpreted as an acknowledgment of our fear, but an asserting of our just liberty. For though nothing can corrupt the Gifts of *GOD*, which *Nature* has produc'd for our use, yet we willingly abstain from those prophane Oblations, lest we might be thought either to acknowledge the *Demons*, to whom they are consecrated, or to be ashamed of our own *Religion*.

But how come you to fancy that we have an Antipathy to Flowers? Don't we gather the Lilly and the Rose, and whatever the Spring affords, and is esteem'd either for its beauty or fragrancy? We both strew them, and tye them up into Nose-gays, and make them into Garlands, which we hang about our necks. But I hope you will excuse us, if we don't wear Garlands on our Heads, and are of opinion that Flowers ought to be smelt by the Nose, and not by the hair or hinder part of the Head. Neither do we think it necessary to crown the Dead
with

with Garlands; but wonder at you for doing of it. For what good can Flowers do them, if they have no sense? Or if they have any, why do you expose them to the funeral flames? Besides, if they be happy, they do not need them; and if they be miserable, Flowers will be but a small comfort to them. As for us, we celebrate the Funerals of our Dead Friends with the same Modesty and Composedness that appears in our whole Life. We don't crown them with Garlands that fade away, they being crown'd with such as are made of immortal and never-dying Flowers, by the hand of *G O D* himself. We are moderate in our desires, being asur'd of the Bounty of our good *G O D*; and freed from all fear, by the certain hopes of a future Felicity; and animated to do and suffer for *Him*, by the Faith of his Glorious presence with us: Insomuch as we have not only a Happiness in reversion at the resurrection of the Just; but are happy already in the contemplation
and

and prospect of our future Blessedness. Therefore let that *Athenian* Droll, *Socrates*, enjoy the comfort of his own confession, that he knows nothing, and glory in the deceitful Testimony given him by the Oracle, upon that account; Let *Arcefilas* and *Carneades*, *Pyrrho*, and the rest of the *Academicks* be continually deliberating and doubting; Let *Simonides* for ever ask a longer day for the giving his Answer; for our part we do not value those *Philosophers*, whom we know to have been *Tyrants*, *Corrupters*, and *Adulterers*, and who were never more Eloquent, than when they declaim'd against their own Vices. We don't endeavour to make a shew of Wisdom in our Garb, but to have it shine forth in the disposition of our Minds and Manners. We don't talk of great things, but live and do them. In short, we make it our glory to have attain'd that which they so earnestly sought for, but could never find. Why are we so unthankful to God? Why do we envy ourselves our own happiness, that it should

should be our lot to see the *Divine* Truth come to its full ripeness in our days? Let us enjoy this great Blessing and advantage of being in the right, and having the Truth on our side, with that temper and modesty which becomes us. Let Superstition be control'd; let all impiety be purg'd away, and let the true Religion be preserv'd and continue for ever.

WHEN *Octavius* had thus ended his Discourse, we remain'd a good while in a kind of amazement, looking earnestly upon one another, without speaking one word. For my part I was almost transported with admiration, that he had both by *Arguments*, and *Examples*, and the *Authority* of Testimonies, which his reading furnish'd him withall, adorn'd so good a Cause, and so clearly made out those things which are more easily *felt* than *express'd*; being most of all pleas'd to see that he had both fought and foil'd them at their own Weapons, and clearly demonstrated, that Truth is not only easie, but hath many favourable advantages on its side.

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Whilst I was thus silently musing with my self, *Cecilius* breaks out into these words; I congratulate *Octavius* most heartily, and my own happiness also, upon this occasion: Neither do I expect your Sentence; We are both Conquerors; nor am I unjust in challenging the Victory; for if *Octavius* has had the better of me, I at the same time do triumph over my own Errors. Therefore, as to what concerns the main Question, I both own a *Providence*, and believe in *GOD*; and for the rest, I agree with you touching the sincerity and truth of *your*, or (to speak more properly) *Our RELIGION*. Nevertheless there remain some few things (not in opposition to Truth, but needful for my fuller information) of which I desire we may entertain some further Discourse. But we will put off this till to morrow (the Sun being now near setting) that at our leisure, and with more convenience we may thoroughly discuss this whole *Matter*.

WHEN *Cecilius* had thus freely utter'd his Mind, As for me (said I) I

am

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am overjoy'd upon the account of us all, and in particular, that *Octavius* has done me so great a pleasure by his Victory, as to deliver me from the envy of judging between my Friends. Nevertheless I shall not launch forth into the Praises of *Octavius*, because I am sensible that I can never give him the Commendations he deserves. Besides, the Testimony of a man, and of one only, is too little: The Great GOD is his Reward, who has inspir'd him with so perswasive a Speech, and enabled him to overcome.

THUS we all departed joyfully, *Cælius*, because he had believ'd; *Octavius*, because he had overcome; and *my self*, both for the *Faith* of the *One*, and *Victory* of the *Other*.

THE END.

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