

THE
Unreasonableness
OF
ATHEISM
Made Manifest;

In a Discourse, written by the
Command of a Person of Honour.

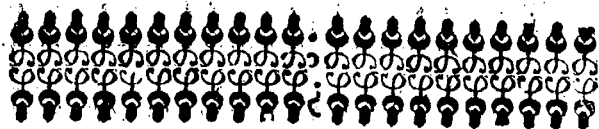
By Sir CHARLES WOLSELEY, Baronet.

*Omnis homo, eo ipso quod rationalis conditus est, ex ipsa
ratione illum, qui se condidit, Deum esse colligere de-
bet. S. Greg. in Mor. &c.*

The third Edition, corrected.

LONDON,

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near Fleetstreet, 1675.



My Lord;

THese Papers, like *Orphans* meanly descended, are glad to forget their Original, and Innoble themselves with the *Adoption* of your Commands. The Title you have to them transfers a *relative Honour*, which is the whole of what they claim to inherit. You have trusted the *richest Jewel* in the Hands of a mean *Artist*, by whom 'twill be set with great disadvantage. You have committed the *noblest* of Subjects to a Prison of *low Thoughts*; where 'tis debased beneath it self, like a rich Soil under a barren *Genius*. The reproach of the highest Thoughts, in their best Exercise, suffers here a Confinement to the *straits* of a very narrow capacity. However, he that *Lifts* himself in the defence of Truth, though he *Fight* ill, is sure to be of the Conquerours side. And he that *Duels* an *Atheist*, can never want a good *Second*: The weakest defence often makes a stand, and gives occasion to greater Forces to rally. Sometimes the happy

A 2 Sling



DEnsis & continuis, iisque validissimis Argumentis Atheismum exagitat iste *Tractatus* cui Titulus, *The Unreasonableness of Atheism made manifest*.

Imprimatur,

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Humfr. London.



Sling of a Stone may Stab a *Goliath* in the Forehead, and Rout his whole Rere-guard.

Every Man cannot lead an *Army* for Truth, but all Men should follow the *Camp*; no Man should ever meet an *Atheist* unarm'd, but wear a constant Weapon in his understanding to Fight him. Each Man combates not the same way; I have provided a *Sling* for such as cannot bear *heavier Armour*; Notions that lie *even* to mean capacities; that he may be able to *bolt his Door* against an *Atheist*, that cannot *build a Cittadel* for his defence. When *Atheism* so loudly batters us on all sides, 'tis time to cast our eyes every way. The weakest places should be first secured; and such who can least make a resistance, should be most taken care for. This is the *Post* I have undertaken, designed me by my own disability to do better. I have chose to help those that are least knowing; to interpose my *feeble Aid* where I see the weakest front, and the worst preparation to endure a shock: Nor will you blame me, if I am pleased with a *Subject*, where I am sure to live by the warmth of reflection; if I contend for the lowest employment; am proud of any admission into such a service, where the meanest *Livory* carries *Grandeur*, and the *lowest Officer* must

must needs be a dignified Person. This choice, as it best secures me against the justest of Fears, [that so noble a Cause should suffer by a weak defence, in the hand of an impotent Champion;] so the suitableness of it to the *most of my self*, gives me hopes of the same acceptance he found under the Law with the *Sacrifice of a Turtle*, that wanted a better Offering. *My Lord*, This prepares you to know, I disclaim the vanity of *instructing you* by this Discourse. 'Tis composed for *you to correct*; for ignorance, *to learn by*. You espoused the Concerns of others, when you commanded this from me. Should I attempt to make your *Lordship* a better *Divine*, I should shake hands with that foolish *Orator*, who being to make an Oration before *Hannibal*, went about to instruct him in the art of War. 'Tis the many unlearned and unstable, who steer not by the Compass of *right Reason*, but by the Winds of every false Notion, and every *deceiving Sophism*, that challenge Discourses of this kind and make them a Debt due from us. Those that have been the guard of every Age, have still encountered the predominant Humour. The World (in every Stage of it) has *besmeared it self* with some peculiar deformity; has corrupted into some *new Distemper*, or improved some *old*

Disease. We seem, at once, greedily to have swallowed the dregs of the *whole*, and to have epitomized the Worlds *Apostacy* in the fatal Plague of *Atheism*. We skirmish not like other Ages, to retail single Truths; but the *whole of Religion* lies at Stake with us. He that yields the Field to an *Atheist*, has at once betrayed all Divine Truth to the Block; and left the noblest property of his Soul in the hand of his worst Enemy. All other Distempers naturally fall in here; they all issue themselves into this infection: Men think it the *cheapest* way of becoming *vile*. The troubles Men are at from the efforts of Conscience, and the convincing Aspect of some open-faced Truths, have, by this, a ready conveyance, and seem shortly dismissed out of the World. They that are *uneasie under all Religion*, if they can once persuade themselves *there is no God*, think they have found a happy expedient to ease them of those cares. This makes the knowledge of God, in these days, to be grown so cheap a commodity, and lie like a drug upon so many Mens hands; they will gladly barter it away for an empty Notion of *Atoms*, or any plausible riddle; the worst Ware serves them, so it come in the room of Religion; they'll never dispute the terms, if they can but come to a bargain; they think they have

have got all, and parted with nothing.

I am contending, by this small endeavour, some little to *antidote* the Poison of this Disease: to forbid the fury of such a *Phrenzie*; to speak to Men in the native Language of their own Reason; to meet with them in the *cool* of the day, and treat with them when the heat of this Distemper may be somewhat abated.

The Man that turns from God, and disowns him, *unhinges* himself from the best of his own being; is highly unjust to his Maker, and forfeits his own interest towards himself. It were not more unnatural, should the leaves of a Tree drop Poison upon their own root: nor less destructive should the Earth refuse the warmth of the Sun. The Glory of Man lies in his Supreme Head; 'tis his *descent* that innobles him: 'tis the Divine Image that greatens him, and crowns him *King of the Universe*. Whoever disclaims such an *original*, and makes it his choice to derive himself from the *nothing of chance*, has forfeited the *best of himself*; has done his utmost to depose himself from his own native Dignity, and becomes the natural prey of every Mans contempt. Nor can we deny the *Existence of God*, without some way assaulting our selves. He must first design a *Rape* upon his own

Reason, that resolves to have nothing *above him*. Our reasonable part disowns all Friendship to an *Atheist*, and is a continual *Herald* proclaiming God in the World. The bottom of all sober thoughts and enquiries bring Men still to *Divinity*. How meanly does the *Atheist Philosophize* when he is contesting with God, when he is projecting an Image, and framing an Idol to supply his place! when he is creating, in his own *intellect*, an Eternity for the World! or when he is *equipping his Atoms* into such a posture, and contriving them into such a *Motion*, as might oblige the World with a donation of its Being! when, instead of a *Deity* in the *greatest heights* above us, he will needs derive us from somewhat in the *lowest Depths* beneath us! Though God cannot be the Object of a *natural eye*, yet he always stands full in the eye of our Reason; has chosen to convey himself to us by that *Noblest Faculty*, as the most comprehensive part of our own Beings, and so the most suitable to his Being: there we know so much of him as fills the *All* of our best capacity; and by the safest way we have of knowing enough, assures us that such a *Being* does exist. Should he descend to any other converse with us, it would rather *amaze* than *satisfie*, and more affright us,

us, than inform us. How vain is he that denies there is a God, because he cannot grasp the *whole of his Being*! When we meet with nothing but has somewhat above us. Were it reasonable to deny the truth of any *Material Being*, because our thoughts can never land us beyond the last *division of quantity*? What we can fully comprehend, we have the least reason to adore. The Notions we have of God in our own souls, of an infinite and perfect Being, loudly proclaim to us our own incapacity to know the utmost of him. The *frame of our selves* is a curtain drawn between us and a full view of what is *infinite*. When we attempt too near approaches to things so much above us, we exceed the bounds of our own Beings, and gain nothing but the reproach of our own folly.

He that devotes himself to the service of *Atheism*, will find he has *bored his ear* to the worst of slavery: And when he thinks he is most at liberty, will find, he has made himself but his own *Prison*. Who ever trades with another, or accosts himself to be the *Atheist's Profelyte*, makes an attempt arising from the worst intention, and aiming at the most impracticable execution. He can never intend well, that would sue

a *Divorce* between God and the World; that would rob the *one* of the Work of his Hands, and the *other* of the Reward of their Labours. He that allows Mankind no hope beyond *themselves*, imposeth a *Negative* upon their best expectation; makes the possession of the World very *uneasie*, without a prospect of some Reversion. The Disciple of an *Atheist* is bowed down to the worst of conditions; he rejects all hopes of a *happy futurity*, and stands all the ventures of a *future misery*. The Fundamentals of an *Atheist* are all begged Supposals. No Man can insure another that Negative, [That there is *no God*:] nor counter-secure him if he mistake. Should it ever appear that *God is*, all he has then gained, is an authority to himself to live ill here, and a security of being chained as the highest Rebel hereafter.

Nor has he undertaken an *easy Province* that designs to shut God out of the World, and bolt the door fast upon him. He's more wisely at work that is busily stopping out the *Tide* with his foot, or he that first shuts up himself in the dark, and then forbids the Sun to shine. He that will compleat an *Atheist*, must have more than the consent of his *own will* to it; the forcible Evidences God has given in of Himself to our Reason,

son, must be first taken out of the way; *Conscience* must be silenced; God must *withdraw* and give his consent to the work. If *Reason* want an Answer, complain of its Doubts, the *Conscience* enters its dissent, and *God* puts in his claim; at the best of such a case, a Man stands *divided against himself*. Yea, his *unruly Appetite* stands single to contest all his sober Results; he becomes *certain in nothing*, and so is betrayed to unhappiness in every thing. He that sets up for an *Atheist*, seems one that *tells you he is so*, has a *mind to be so*, acts as if he *were so*, rather than one that *really is so*. His own Reason calls him a Fool that looks *beneath himself* for his Original. And he becomes a *Monster* to his own Soul, that kneels to his own Deity, and makes himself his own Idol.

How far any Man ever yet failed in this *Male mortuum*; how far ever God answered any Man according to this Folly, and (chusing his Delusion) left him to the waking Dream of an *Atheistical Faith*; let the *Atheist* himself then determine, when (without a disturbance from God, his Conscience, or his Reason) he has lived over his *own Being*, and at last finds, he has breathed himself into *nothing* but the *circutar Motion* of the World.

My Lord, I have now enough disposed you to endure an *ill Seat*, by the *foul way* I have brought you to it. 'Tis not intended to detain you; the whole is but a *little Hut* set up to treat you with an our or two's entertainment, and to be demolished as you please. The *worthy labours* of others might well tempt me to disobey you: nor should I have ventured upon this small recruit, but that I see the daily *Auxiliaries* the *Atheist* thrives by. I have industriously waded the disputing with other Mens Reason; and as little affected the plurality of *Quotations*. I have made little repetition of *Plato's Divine Sentences*; nor transcribed much of *Cicero's* excellent Tract *De Natura Deorum*; (the usual Ornaments of such Discourses.) Nor have I roused the *old Philosophers* much to assist me, who are yet generally the foes of an *Atheist*. All which I might well have undertaken, as being no appurtenant to the hardest part of this performance. I have rather chose to entertain the *Atheist* with such *plain Blows*, as my weak hand was able to bestow upon him: and to set before *Your Lordship* the coarse food of mine own labours, rather than feast you with other Mens dainties.

Before I come to close with the *Atheist*,
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and try the most of his strength, I shall *attaque* him at some distance, and view some of his out-works. And it may happily be neither unpleasing to *Your Lordship*, nor unuseful to the Work in hand, if I first lay before you those things, which to me, seem more especially to have been in this Age, the steps that have gradually led to *Atheism*, and the unhappy promoters of so sad a defection; and they will come under these several heads following. To all which I must premise, *That 'tis no way necessary, that such who deny all supernatural Knowledge of God, should thereby become open avowers of Atheism*, because there are Principles of natural Religion, that do sufficiently preserve Men in their *Allegiance* to a Deity, without any thing Supernatural. But yet, where Men, in possession of *Supernatural Revelation*, upon any account begin to oppose and reject it, as it most commonly ariseth from a general dislike to the Notion of a Deity and Religion; so it usually ends in a total desertion of both.

First, *To bottom all Religion upon humane Authority, and derive it from the Power and Pleasure of Men*, tends (in the consequences of it) to destroy all Religion, and at last to bring Men to no Religion. If we once
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take away *Divine Authority* from Religion; we have made an Inroad upon its best Defence. It will never be kept up, with any other interest in the *Consciences* of Men: and where 'tis not supported by the *Conscience*, 'tis ever tottering, and yields to the blasts of every *humane Pleasure*. If once it be taken for granted, that *the Scriptures have no Authority, but what the Civil Power gives them*, they will soon come, upon a Divine account, to have *none* at all. Nothing gratifies the *Atheist* more, when he is pulling down the Pillars of Religion, than positions of this nature. 'Tis to render the homage Men pay to Religion as a thing Divine, upon even terms with the Reverence Men pay to an Idol. When they come at last to consider, 'tis *nothing in the World*; that is, 'tis nothing of what they in their Worship take it to be; that 'tis a thing of humane make; a piece of Wood, or a piece of Stone: that has nothing upon it but the stamp of Mens Artifice: and that 'tis not an intrinsique worth, but the Art and Pleasure of Men that give it its Authority; their Reverence will, in time, wear off from it, and they will come to value it just as it is. Dangerous therefore to the concerns of Religion, are the consequences of such assertions as tend this way. An Author,
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not a little popular, amongst many other expressions that complexion the same way, hath this passage; sayes he, *The Apostles could not make their Writings Obligatory Canons, without the help of the Sovereign Civil Power: and therefore the Scripture of the New-Testament is there only Law, where the Civil Power hath made it so.* Hobs *Leviathan*, Chap. 24. p. 285. And in his 38 Chapter he tells us plainly: 'Tis impossible a Commonwealth should stand, where any greater Rewards and Punishments are talked of, than what the Civil Sovereign is able to dispence, which is present Life and present Death; and therefore sayes that *Eternal Life, and Eternal Death, being higher Rewards and Punishments, are things well to be considered of, what is meant by them!* And toward the end of the Chapter, concludes; *There is no ground to believe any one Man should have an Eternal Life in Punishment.* Which things correspond well to the description he gives of Religion it self in the beginning of his Book; where he tells us, in his sixth Chapter, in these words, that *fear of Power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publickly told, is Religion.* First, such Notions as these about the *Scripture* make it impossible, the *Gospel* should ever be legally preached in any *Heathen State*; for where
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'tis no Law, it can never be lawfully preach'd as a Law. And Secondly, Whoever is so Disciplin'd to them as to believe, 'tis in the Power of every State whether the Gospel shall be *Authentique* or not, must needs throw off all Divine respect to it, and be in a very fair way to trouble himself little with any Devotion arising from it. The whole of these Principles point Men to direct *Atheism*, and have accordingly found a grateful acceptance amongst such as travel that way. The plain effect of them is, to make the rise and termination of *all Religion* to be from Civil and Humane Authority, and a Power inherent in, and derived from *this visible World*; and that all things *beyond this World* are meerly fabulous, and such *Phantasms*, as Men have fondly conceived and created within themselves. How can the *Atheist* have better Service done him, than to have a *nullity* put upon the *Divinity of all Religion*; and to have those great supporters of it in the minds of Men (Eternal Rewards and Punishments) secretly undermined and demolished? The ultimate result of all these *Documents*, is, that Men come at last firmly to believe nothing, and so freely practise any thing.

Secondly, *When a practical conformity to the plain common Truths of Religion is rendered a thing*

a thing to be derided, and turned into a common mockery; as a thing soppish and ridiculous; 'tis a plain preface of Atheism. Though it be done to the practice of those, whose principles, in other things, we never so much dislike; and upon the account of a Religion, never so much otherwise mistaken; 'tis the ready way to make men serve all Religion so, and at last, to deride at the whole systeme of it under any opinions or practices whatsoever. 'Tis not reasonable to believe, that there should be any other bottom of a mans denying himself in forbearing to sin, and doing such things, as would otherwise please and advantage him, but *Religion* and Conscience, and that having its rise from the sence of an *eternal Being above him*, that forbids such things. And therefore, when a man lies under contempt for so doing, the truth of such proceedings is to mock at all notion of a Deity, and the Being of God himself. As the chiefest, so the most amiable part of Religion lies in the *practick*; if that once come under *contempt* all the *Theory* of it will soon expire. He that will deride a man because he will not *lye* for his advantage, and be *unjust* for his gain, nor be *prophane* to please another; will scorn him much more if he discourse of a *Trinity in Heaven*, and mens *ri-*

sing again after death. Matters of this nature should be *sacredly* kept from *prophane* contempt. Such things as are the *common* coin of all Christians, though they be done either upon *grounds mistaken*, or *principles hypocritical*, yet they are well done for the bare act of them, and so far challenge encouragement. We must not pretend to such a *Superiority* over the *rectitude* of mens judgements, or the *Sincerity* of mens intentions, as to take occasion thereby to scorn all practice of Religion out of the world. When the most indisputable parts of *Religion*; nay, the *practice of any Religion*, comes to be the publick sport of mens Wit, and the triumph of common Drollery; when men design the exercise of their parts to find out the most apposite ways to make Divinity the great object of publick derision and contempt, it cannot but preface a drowning deluge of *Atheism*. Men can never be serious with that, and *reverence* it at one time, which they make the subject of their *scorn* at another. Render a Prince or a State *ridiculous before the people*, and once bring them under open contempt, and you will soon remove the peoples Obedience; and in that pursuit, soon debase Government it self, to be trodden down, and trampled under foot. Things of this nature have insensibly begotten

begotten men into *Atheism*, and disgusted them from all seriousness in Religion; and made a man of any Conscience seem the highest emblem of absurdity; and at last, men rather chuse to say, *There is no God*, as thinking it every way more decent, than to retain a naked acknowledgment of one, and yet to act such things as plainly condemn him, and carry an open defiance to him.

Thirdly, *The Multiplicity of Oaths that were, some late years past, amongst us*: the taking and renouncing them, *backward and forward*, has been no useless friend to *Atheism*. This has deflowred our integrity, and taken away the Virginity of Conscience; and made a dangerous invasion upon all honesty among men, and all Religion toward God. He that once comes to cast off his reverence and dread of God in an Oath, which is the highest and nearest Appeal to him, will cast it off in any thing, and at last, come to declare open war with Conscience in every thing. The Land mourns with *Atheism* because of these *Oaths*. We must record it as none of the least of our misfortunes in this Age, that Men have been so unhappily provoked and tempted in this matters of *Oaths*. For, either by opposing

Conscience, or dallying with it, in so high a concern as an *Oath*, they have, at last, taken leave of all Religion; and have briefly resolved all the doubts and disputes about the several obligations arising from several *Oaths*, by thinking, that there is no obligation from any. The imposing contrary *Oaths*, is so far from securing any body, that it deceives every body. The last imposer usually attains the least of his end. For men (to avoid the dreadful sentence of Conscience in such cases) recur to plain *Atheism*; and that sets them beyond the reach of an *Oath*, or any other obligation whatsoever: And when we think we have tyed them up fastest, they break through all those things, and as much despise them as *Sampson* did his *green withs*. 'Tis the wisdom of a state to preserve Conscience as a sacred Jewel; and especially in that highest exercise of it in an *Oath*. Such who cannot be bound fast to God by *Oaths* lawfully administred, will never be bound safe to their King, nor sure one to another, 'Tis the *Atheism* that we groan under, that occasions that common trade of Perjury, that is driven on amongst those, upon whose integrity to an *Oath* the *All* of our humane concerns depends. That reverence men had heretofore of an *Oath*, this age scoffs at. When, men by false swearing

swearing and lying to God in the most solemn appeals to him, are grown into open hostility with him; they think *Atheism* the best way to determine the Controversie. By that they hope to extinguish the trouble of what is past, and to secure themselves in the quiet possession of such courses for the future.

Fourthly, *The contempt that has been cast upon the Scriptures, and all supernatural Revelation*, has opened a wide door to *Atheism*. Men seldom keep true to the principles of natural Religion, that cast away all *supernatural* Revelation. Men have so kicked at what is supernatural, and so much questioned and doubted those things, and the manner of their conveyance to the World; that at last they have combar'd their natural Light, and denied the truth of a Deity. We must not imagine supernatural Religion to be such a thing, that 'tis not capable of opposition. The Devil has not so desperate a game to play in the world: he has some *mists* to bring men into, where he may couzen and mislead them. God has not made the world so as to satisfy the captious questions of every froward perverse dissenter, that designs to himself dissatisfaction. He has left us no answer to those that ask, why he did not make the world in a day;

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say, why not by a word ; which he could have done as well as to have taken *six days* time to do it in : nor why he made so many creatures that seem to be of no use ; and others that seem to do nothing but hurt ; and a thousand other such Questions. God has reserved such kind of Objections to the answer of his own Sovereignty. If men must needs know why God does not continually speak to the world, and *viva voce* determine every thing, and put all things out of doubt ; if they must needs know why God does not come down, as he did upon Mount *Sinai*, to satisfy men of the truth of his Law ; and why Christ does not often come down from Heaven, and work *Miracles* to confirm the truth of the Gospel ; God hath intrusted no man with an answer to such impudent and absurd Questions. Nor would such men who ask such Questions, be probably more satisfied with such things, if they were done, than now they are. The *Jews* found a way to evade the Miracles of Christ, and to father them upon the Power of the Devil ; and so to credit nothing he said. He that now calls for *Ocular* and *Mathematical* demonstrations about the Scriptures and the proof of them, (or else he will believe nothing, but look upon all supernatural Revelation as a fabulous story) 'tis as much
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as to say, he will not believe those things, unless he have such proofs of them, as are *impossible* to be had, and the nature of them will no way bear ; which is all one as to say, he is positively resolved before-hand not to believe them at all. Although we were not, at the first, eye-witnesses of God's delivery of the Scriptures to the World, nor of those Miracles by which they were confirm'd ; nor have an Infallibility in each particular circumstance of their Conveyance down to us ; that is, we do not say that every *Transcriber*, and every *Printer* of them was, or is infallible ; but that 'tis possible (after the utmost of all humane care) in a letter or a word, there may happen to be mistakes (of which no other use can be made, but to quicken and continue our diligence about them ;) yet for the whole *body of the Scriptures*, we have all the reason to satisfy us about the truth of them, that any thing, that we have not actually seen, is possibly capable of. And, setting aside its own *innate worth*, and the evidence it carries with it of its own divine Authority, we have all the collateral proof of moral Testimony, that any such thing can have. And upon that single account, without any other (setting by all the effects of it) have as good reason to believe the truth of the
B 4 Scripture

Scripture, as to believe any other thing whatsoever, that we our selves have not beheld. How ridiculous would he appear to be, that would believe nothing but what he has seen? deny all Records of things past; and the existence of any part of the World now, but just what he has beheld? He that has lived in the remotest part of *England*, may be as sure there is such a place as *London*, as he can be of any *Mathematical* proposition, for there is as much certainty in the kind of the one, as there is in the kind of the other, and both capable of certainty in their kind; and yet the one is not capable of the *same way of probation* with the other. He that will go about to persuade me I may be couzened in such a moral Belief, and cannot arrive at a certainty; I may, with as good reason, trouble him with objections, and provoke him to doubt of what he himself sees; and tell him, Either his *eye sight* may fail, or mis-inform him; or else the object may be such as may be purposely disposed to couzen and delude his sight; in the one a man hath nothing but the single testimony of his *own eyes*; in the other the testimony of thousands transferred to him upon unquestionable credit. The worst designers against Religion cannot deny the *universal testimony of all ages to the*

the body of the Scripture: Even out of the mouths of its greatest enemies it may be justified; who (labouring confute it, and overthrow the doctrine of it) have left us an undeniable testimony to the truth of the *fact* of it. Those who most opposed it in the ages when it looked first abroad, had never the impudence to deny the *Being* of it; nor the being of it with such circumstances as enough justify the Divine Authority of it. And for the differences in the *Copies* and *Translations* of the Scripture it self (which men have so magnified and multiplied to invalidate its Authority, and destroy the credit of the whole) after the utmost diligence of the most learned, in comparing all the *Copies*, and all the *Translations* of those *Copies*, that are extant, or can be found; and all the care that possibly could be taken therein, (and never was there so great exactness and care about any writing since the world began) and the utmost improvement of the most malicious objections that way; so eminent does the Providence of God appear in preserving the Scriptures entire, that the differences and variations do appear so small, so inconsiderable, and so far from undermining the whole, that they have not so much as in the least shaken any *one Divine Truth*, or disturbed

us in our belief of any one point in Religion; but have poured out abundant shame upon those, who built their designs to ruine the Scriptures upon that foundation: and have rendred them equally wise, and equally ingenuous with such, who would deny the relation of a Book to its Author, and deny the whole of any Treatise, because of some small inconsiderable *Errata's* in the impression. Such things may gratifie peevish and froward persons, who gape for objections; but will never find acceptance with sober and unprejudic'd men. Let such who take the greatest pleasure to make the *Scriptures* the object of their contempt, consider but soberly with themselves, if there be any thing supernatural; if God has ever revealed himself further to the world, than in that knowledg he gave us of himself in our first make: (which we have abundant reason to believe he has) how could it be handed down to us upon more *credible* terms?

First, the Scripture it self, written in a way wholly becoming such an Author as God himself and no other; and in such a way as does plainly *spirare divinitatem*; with such Majesty, Authority, and Impartiality, as relate themselves to God; and with such positive *Predictions* in it, of things to come; and writing with that certainty
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about things many hundred years off remote and future, as if it were a History of things past or present; and the punctual accomplishments the whole world has been witness to of these Predictions; bears witness unto it self. Thus *Isaiah* prophesied of *Cyrus* by name, and foretold he should conquer the *Babylonians*, and ruine their Monarchy, a hundred and four years before *Cyrus* was born. And other such-like Predictions innumerable there are contained in them; which as they most evidently tell us there is a God, and somewhat above the World; so they unanswerably declare the Scriptures to be his word.

Secondly, The whole *Doctrine* of the Scriptures; the Principles of it being such, as are most suitable and agreeing to our natural Light, and that Image of God, and the distinguishing Taste of good from evil, we received from God in our first constitution, is of the same consideration. Nothing can be devised more useful and profitable for all publick *Societies*, and all private converse, than the Principles the Scriptures offer to us. Nor did any thing ever so much heighten all natural Religion, and bring men to so neer a converse with God, and so great a conformity on that account to him; or induce any thing so much for
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the common and general good of all Mankind. No man can well deny, but that he that lives a life conformed to the Scriptures, shall live most to God, best to himself, and most usefully to all Mankind; and to the height of those excellent Principles which all the sober and serious men, since the world began, have justified and applauded.

Thirdly, The whole *matter of fact* about the Scripture, and the Miracles wrought to establish them, descends to us with a general concurring Testimony from the ages wherein they were transacted. And we have as much to assure us and satisfy us in that, as such a thing is capable of; as much indeed as can be had about a thing past and not seen by our selves; and so much as we ought fully to acquiesce in. *No matter of fact* about the Scripture can otherwise be proved to us that live in distant Ages: And *matter of fact* must necessarily belong to it and have its proof that way; unless the Bible had every Age a new edition, and were often re-delivered and re-printed from Heaven.

Fourthly, A *divine Power* there is attending the Scripture, to gain it an interest and reception in the world, which is peculiar to it self, and nothing else can boast of. To those, who by themselves know there is
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such a *divine power* attending the Scriptures 'tis to them an infallible argument of the Truth of them, and to others that stand by, an argument of *high probability*; because they hear many, who are sober and serious, attesting it, whose credit they have no reason to reject. And they themselves in such mens practice see the visible effects of it, and a great part of the World converted by it.

Those that will slight over all these things, and resolve to despise and reject them: that will object against the first, and tell you, That the style of the Scripture is nothing, but an effect of their cunning and design, who intended to cheat the world by it, and so personated God as much as they could; That those *Predictions* of things to come, were only put in to gain credit to it at the first, and have since, by chance, come to pass; or else that men foresaw them by the natural course of the stars. That say to the *second*, they cannot find that excellency in the *Doctrine* of the Scriptures we speak of, but rather find it interrupts and crosses them in all those things they take most delight and pleasure in. That reject wholly the *third*, and throw away all belief of things past, and resolve to credit nothing but what they see. That mock at
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the *fourth* (the Divine Power attending the Scripture) and deny the Being of any such thing ; think it a vain imagination ; and tell you, That many *fabulous stories*, and false Religions , have equally gained upon the World ; and found many, that have religiously bowed down themselves to them, and submitted to deluding Impositions from them. Those I say that will thus object and feed upon this kind of trash ; that find a way to convert into humour and disease all such notions of things as are the satisfying food of sober and reasonable men ; and resolve to believe nothing they do not *like* ; that will deny the truth of all divine and rational Impressions upon Mankind , because some of them are deluded and mistaken ; and will admit no men to have attained a right knowledg in Divine things , suitable to the truest exercise of their rational Faculties, because part of the World, either by weakness or corruption, are under the dominion of vanity and lies : Such men are most punished when they are left to themselves, nor is it less vain to endeavour their satisfaction, than to make a demonstration about colours to one that we know *cannot* , or else is resolved that he *will* not look upon them ; or to convince him of the harmony of any sound, that resolves before-

before-hand to make no use of his ears ; or, at least to call every thing discord, that does not suit with some *ill sound* his ears are already possessed with.

Supernatural Religion is a thing proposed to men with reason abundantly sufficient to satisfy a man , reasonably willing to be satisfied , and to leave him without excuse if he be not satisfied. And besides all other proofs of it, the same humane evidence, by which we rest satisfied in all other things that we do not see, descends to all Ages ; but not with answers to every forward dissenters objections, that will dispute without end against the truth of it , because he dislikes the matter of it ; and be so absurdly disingenuous to deny that to be a good proof to him of the Truth of the *Scriptures*, by which he himself rests satisfied in the truth of a thousand other things. He that will give no credit to any divine Revelation, unless God will satisfy his *curiosity* in the manner of its Conveyance to the world, says in effect ; Though God have given me other good reason , and such as he thought sufficient for me to believe him, and upon which he has made it my duty to believe him ; and *such reason*, as I my self think sufficient for the Belief of all other things of the like nature ; and such

such as I think abundant proof to make good any thing I have a mind to ; yet *I will not* believe him , unless I please. And though my Reason tell me, that some Being, superiour to all beings, made the world; Yet, unless I had seen him do it, I will not believe it.

Such men are monstrous *Fanaticks*, men that live upon fancy ; that fancy to themselves , how God should govern the World, and how he should reveal himself to it ; and because he does not do it according to their *fancy*, and descend to gratifie their fond imaginations, they make it a Law to themselves, that they will neither receive nor admit any of his Laws, nor pay any acknowledgment to his Being. What delight have men taken of late to upbraid the Scriptures with all kind of uncertainty in the *delivery* of them, and all kind of contradictions and absurdities in the *matter* of them ? Mens wits and parts have encreased their value with very many , as they could best enlarge upon these heads ; and despise others , as *weak* and to be pitied, who make any stand for divine Truth. By this, men tempt themselves and others into a mean value of Religion, and at last , into the highest irreligion. 'Tis, I confess, a noble enquiry
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to search into the *grounds of Religion*, that so we may be rationally ascertained of its Truth, and not take our greatest concern upon trust. But to deal in those things with no other intention, but to tie knots, to invent vexing questions, and peevish objections ; and , because the Scriptures cross mens boundless appetites , to load them with all imaginable disgrace and contempt, that so God may be more easily dismissed out of the world : If we deal with the Scriptures, I say, upon no better or other account, 'tis no wonder if the success be accordingly ; and that men, steering such a course not only turn their backs upon all *supernatural Religion* ; but at last arrive at the utmost confines of all prophaneness and contempt of Religion it self in down-right *Atheism*.

Fifthly, 'Tis no unusual thing to see many, that if they may not enjoy the *worship* they are affected to, and think the best, will go to none at all. And from such a habit once gotten, 'tis easie to foresee what a precipice of *Atheism* men are at the brink of. All men are not so well *catechized* in Religion, nor so well affected to it as to try all experiments before they forsake it. There is, in the generality of men, something in the *parties* and persons they adhere

to; and in the *mode* of Worship they joyn in, which pleaseth them, and has some part in their affections, aswell as Religion it self purely and abstractly considered. And although such *collateral things* are in themselves not the best and highest motives to divine Worship; yet they are such, as considerably prevail with not the least part of Mankind: And they are such, as God in his providence over-rules, to preserve men in their open owning a Deity, and a visible subjection to him in some outward Worship, and to prevent a total apostacy to Atheism.

We may not unreasonably suppose, that the restraint, which in some times past, was upon the use of the *Liturgy*, and the present Worship of the Church of *England*, to which the generality of the Nation were earnestly inclined, did much occasion that *Atheism*, which hath, too visibly, infected many amongst us. For, not being able to enjoy the way of Worship they most liked, and wholly disgusting the way that was then used in publick, 'tis to be feared that in a short time, many came, by that means, to throw off all thoughts of God; and, by a disuse of paying any homage or service to him, came, at last, totally to deny him, and positively to dispute against him.

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The great concern of a Christian State is to justify the *common Cause of God* in the World, and to dam out the flood of general *Atheism*. Such; who can have no tie from *above*, and disown all superior obligations, are never to be ruled but by force. Religion should be encouraged as that universal homage Mankind stands obliged to pay to a Sovereign Being. Keeping men firm in their *Religious Allegiance* has a necessary influence upon all human Societies. He that is the fastest to God, will be the most dutiful Subject, the most useful Citizen, and the safest Friend. Whatever tends to eradicate Religion, will be found also most pernicious and destructive to the State.

Sixthly, *The general revival of, and the great applause that hath of late, been given to such philosophical notions, as broadly and directly lead this way.* Here the *Atheist* is most busily at work, and drives on his greatest trade. Though other things help men, first, to like *Atheism*, and look after it; yet here is the great armoury for their defence; here they learn to justify what before they resolved to like. *Democritus* is better believed than *Moses*, and *Epicurus* in better credit with them than *St. Paul*. Whatever can be fetched

from *Aristotle* and others to make good the worlds Eternity, is greedily embraced: and all the notions of *Epicurus*, to make good the *Hypothesis of Atoms*, are not only revived and justified, but improved, to the total denial of a God, in the height of all Atheistical principles, and maintained with so much seeming triumph over the rest of the world, that he is thought a novice in knowledge, and an absolute freshman in the highest sort of learning, that has not imbibed some of this kind of Philosophy. The reasons, or rather, absurdities, upon which these things are grounded, I shall have occasion enough to consider hereafter. This account ought every-where to be given of them; that as these two are the only projects, that have been yet found out by all the *Atheistical wits* that have been in the World, to oppose the Being of God; so they are such things as were by some very few men only first started, and found very little acceptance in those times, wherein they first became publick: Nay, were contradicted and confuted, by the generality of the soberest and wisest men then extant. 'Tis truly observed by a learned Author, That the first Atheism we hear of in the world was in the most blind and super-

stitious

stitious age of *Greece*; when the *obscene Poets* had so debauched the minds of the people, to believe such monstrous things of their gods, that all, who were any way virtuous, must needs abhor such Deities, and they became a derision to all intelligent men. Then it was, (and not till then) that men began to set their wits on work, to solve the *Phænomena* of nature without any Deity at all, and derive the world (in its original) from a *fortuitous concurrence* of an infinite company of little particles, which we call *Atoms*. Yet the very school of *Epicurus* himself never quite banished the notion of a Deity: which made *Cicero* say of him, that he did *nominare* but *re tollere deos*: His Disciples in these days have too far enlarged those attainments. It falls out now amongst us (in an Age declining from God, wherein such things are by many most set by, that lead us farthest from him, and seem most to secure us against him) that the scent of these things is freshly and hotly pursued: and the *Rabble* of these Notions, which have been so often routed, and have fled before the World, are now faced about, and a-fresh recruited to assault this present Generation.

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These

These unhappy conjunctions, with many others, have conspired to make this Age a sufferer from the *worst of enemies*, and to hazard us upon the most dangerous Rock. Men have (according to their several interests and inclinations) come several ways to disgust Religion: and out of many lesser tracks, fallen at last into the broad road of *Atheism*.

By this, *My Lord*, I have endeavour'd to shew you some fore-runners of this evil, and some of those Harbingers that usually prepare for it. I shall detain you no longer in these *Preliminaries*, but apply my self to that, where the greatest concern of this Undertaking lies.

That the noblest search of humane thoughts is after the first and highest Being, will not be denied; and 'tis equally true, that mans reasoning faculty, in its due exercise naturally steers him that way. He that finds himself in possession of that great *Luminary* we call Understanding, and that supreme endowment of Reason, (by which he hath the ascendant of all other visible Beings, and maintains a supremacy over the rest of the World) must

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needs be led, by that, to lay close siege to his *own Being*, and bethink himself round, how himself (as well as all other things) came first to be. 'Tis that lower principle of *sense* that lies beneath, that rests in the visible existence of things, and knows no more of them than that they are. Reason's motion lies in a higher Orb, and will not be denied to know *why* things are, as well as that they are; and *how* they came to be, as well as that they be. Such a falsely a reasonable Being must needs make beyond the world; and so create to himself a subject for his enquiry beyond what is visibly seen, and made the common object of his converse. To see a man railing himself and the rest of the world by the *fresh springing up of thoughts*, and the actings of his Reason; and yet to suppose him to go no further in the extension of that faculty, than barely to improve things just as he finds them; and to take all things for granted therefore originally to be, only because they now actually are: to search so narrowly into every corner of Nature, and yet to take the highest relation to things (which is the Being of them) for granted, were to put the highest absurdity upon the universal Reason, and to narrow that large comprehensive Faculty

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into

into a very mean exercise. The genuine tendency of a rational Soul is still to the utmost bounds of all enquiry; to know what is capable of being known, and to be ascertained what cannot be known. As the satisfaction of Reason is in its own exercise, and can have no satisfaction but what it gives it self; and takes pleasure in all other things only as they are matter for that faculty to work upon; So the chiefest attainment Reason must needs press after, is, to know it self in its own original, and to know the first Cause of that, which gives being to the knowledg of all other causes. Reason, in its actings, aims at a full comprehension, and a compleat knowledg of every thing it can conceive of: which is, to make every thing appear reasonable to it; and so reduce it to a satisfaction to it self. All reasonings of a man, about himself and all other things, must needs come short of the satisfaction reason aims at, in making things answer the test of its exercise; and, at last, lie even to its own *innate rectitude*, unless it arrive at some acquiescency, how it self and all other things *came to be*, as well as that they be. He that *thinks*, or reasons, must needs know, by that act, that he is; he needs no other demonstration of his own
Being

Being to himself, and with great ease, may he inform himself of the actual existence of all other things. But the So uls enquiry will still reach further; the proper food of craving Reason is a reasonable knowledg of things such as the subject is capable of. Reason travels to reduce things: *First*, To the truth of their existence. *Secondly*, To the reason of their existence. And *Thirdly*, To the right manner and method of their existence, in their relation to, and dependence upon each other. The *whole truth* of no existence can be known, so as Reason may justly challenge a knowledg of it, without knowing the *cause* of it, or else knowing there was *no cause* of it: because the great and supreme distinction of *Beings* lies in the absoluteness and dependency of them. To know any visible existence to be *without cause*, is to know it to be that, which no man can rationally know any visible being to be: which is to know it to be eternal. And if it have some first Cause, without some reasonable account of that to our selves, we can never tell from what, nor from whence to date it; nor how to answer many other questions Reason will ask about it. Things are never in their proper station, till they are made a right object
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for knowledg, and reduced to a due correspondence to Reason. Then they bear their proportion to the great and universal harmony. 'Tis Reason puts the World into regular motion; sorts each thing; places Causes before Effects; finds out Causes by Effects, and necessary Conclusions from their own natural premises; and still pursues things to the highest and *supremest Cause* of all. Search the World without this Candle, and it will appear nothing but a heap of confusion. God seems to have placed this sublime Faculty in Man, for two ends: *First*, That a Man might rule himself, and the rest of the World, in such a manner and method, as might carry some proportion to the eternal Reason above, of which mans rational Soul is an image. And *Secondly*, that by the use of it he might ascend to the knowledg of his Maker, and have every thing he saw, as well as himself, made a step to help him upward. The ground of all our homage to God lies in the knowledge we have of a *Supreme Being* before us and above us: Without that 'tis impossible ever to introduce Religion into the World. Two things seem to be but a reasonable collection from the natural composition of Mankind, and the pure issues

issues of a reasoning Soul, abstractly taken from all helps of Revelation: *First*, That 'tis not possible for that noble and impartial *faculty* of mans Reason to be true to it self in its own actings, and to arrive at its own necessary satisfaction, about it self and all other beings, without a strict inquiry into the primary reason and first cause of the being of it self and all other things. And *Secondly*, That the single exercise of natural Reason, in such an inquiry, will safely conduct a man to the conclusion of some *first Cause*, and some one *supreme Being* the cause of all Beings, which we call God. To prove these Positions undoubted Truths, shall be the first endeavour of the following discourse. If we can happily bring Mankind to God by this high-way of their Reason, and light a man to his Creator by this *Lamp* that continually burns in his own soul, we shall then prove *Atheism* a very *lye*, and the *Atheist* a most unnatural *lyar* towards his God, and towards himself. I shall proceed, *First*, *affirmatively* and positively; and then *negatively*, in giving a full answer to all the *Atheist* has to object.

Consider, in the first place, 'tis not a thing within any compass of supposition, that Mankind in the use of their Reason, should

should fail to fix upon that as their first and great enquiry, *How things came to be, in the posture they are now found? and what original they owe themselves to?* that faculty that reasons about *causes* and *effects*, must needs ascend, by that method, to the highest Cause of all things. No satisfying knowledge, which the Soul still labours after, can be had of any thing, unless we can trace it to its *original*; without that, it proves but a vexation to reason, and reproaches it with ignorance, in that grand fundamental in the knowledge of things, which must give the truest inlet to all the subsequent comprehension we can have of them. That Reason, in its operation, must needs move this way, will appear by these several considerations.

First, *There is no more obvious enquiry for whatever we see, than to know, whether it have a beginning, or were without a beginning.* If it had beginning, when it did begin, and how it came first to exist in the World; and from whence it had the donation of it self. No mans Reason can acquiesce, without some answer to this.

Secondly, *Finding out the original of things, determines the property of them;* and so fills the mind with a satisfaction in that great concern Reason has about every thing,

thing, to know whose it is. Whatever was the first Cause of a thing, and the original Maker of it, must needs have the property of it. 'Tis impossible there should be a claim made, with so much justice, to any thing, as by the first Maker of it. 'Tis not possible to dispossess him of his Right to a thing, that gave it its existence, and caused it first to be. He that first produced a Being, had that Being first entirely existing in himself, and in his own power. Whatever is made, can have no property in it self: The Right must needs be in the Maker. Here Reason sits down satisfied, and fully acquiesces in that particular.

Thirdly, *The knowing the original of any thing, gives us the true boundaries and limits of it.* Nothing can rise higher than its original. No effect can out-reach the cause. Nay there must be ever a necessary inferiority in whatever is caused, to the first Cause of it. This is a necessary direction to all the searches of reason about the nature of any thing, to know the first Cause of such a Being, and the true Original it derives it self from.

Fourthly, *The knowledge of things in their prima causa quiets our reason, because it gives us the utmost and ultimate knowledge that*

that is to be had about them. To know a thing in it self, and to know it in its first *cause* and *original*, is to know *all* that Reason can expect to know about any visible Being. This brings things to hold their due proportion to the rational Soul; and rectifies us in our knowledg, in placing *Causes* and *Effects* in their due Stations.

Secondly, If the being of Reason be such, as that it must necessarily make out it self into such enquiries; and that the first Cause of things is the most proper object for a rational Soul that trades in Causes and Effects, we will thus proceed.

Every thing in this World must either be caused by it self, or be without cause, or else be caused by something that was before, and is above it self. The two first are not only improbable, but utterly impossible: and therefore the Truth must needs lie in the last.

For the first; The *rudest Nonsense* that can impose it self upon any mans Reason, is to say, *That any thing ever caused or made it self.* 'Tis to make every thing its own God, and to cut up by the roots all subordination and dependency of one thing upon

upon another. For, were all things equally caused by themselves, they must needs be equal in their superiority, because equal in their independency. 'Tis likewise to make a thing impossible to have an end; for what once made it self, can, by the same influence, eternally make it self. If any thing were once the reason of it self, it may be ever so: nor would any thing ever cease to be, that had a power to preserve its own Being. But besides all this, there is this further absurdity never to be avoided; to say a thing made it self, is to say, it did *act* before it *was*, and did operate before it had an existence; and that it did the highest thing to it self (which was to cause and make it self) before it was it self. The lowest sort of Reason wears an *antipathy* to such an absurdity.

Secondly, *The World could not be without Cause*: For then it must be what 'tis impossible it should be, which is eternal. For Causes and Effects (of which the World consists) own themselves to a first Cause, and necessarily suppose *time* and *priority* in time. The Cause naturally precedes the Effect. They must have time to operate in. Causes and Effects (that are in such existence, necessarily conjoyned) must needs

needs cease to that denomination in Eternity, and so cease to be what they really are; and therefore are impossible to be eternal: if one be eternal, the other must needs be so too. And 'tis evident, an eternal Cause, and an eternal Effect is an absurdity. Now that the World could not be eternal (and so consequently without cause) may thus appear. If the world be *eternal*, 'tis plain and undeniable, it must ever have been in the posture that now it is: and that is utterly impossible; for the posture the world is now in, is a course of generation and corruption; and so corruption must as well have been eternal as generation. And thence 'twill evidently follow, that things that do generate and corrupt must have eternally been, and *eternally not* have been. If the World have been from everlasting, then the present state of the world in the propagation of it self must needs have been so too. The present way of *generation*, and a succession in that generation, must needs have been everlasting too. For if the World be eternal, though individual persons and Beings cease, and new come in their places; yet the general round and course of the World, in maintaining it self, must needs have been the same for ever. But to conceive that, is directly

directly to oppose our own Reason and Experience: because we find daily, that the way by which the World is now propagated and upheld, could not have eternally been, but plainly points us to some original cause we see not. For if the Hen be produced by the Egg, and that Egg produced by a Hen, and the propagation of both run in such a circle; common Reason tells us, there must be some first Hen, or some first Egg to set that way of Generation on work, or else it could never have been. As 'tis in *motion*; there must be some first mover, or else an innate and self-originated principle of motion; if there be an innate self-originated principle of motion, then whatsoever so moves, can never cease to move; if not, there can never be motion without a first mover. We see nothing but what is produced by somewhat else: and therefore must rationally conclude, there must be some first producer. The whole World can shew us the beginning, originally of nothing, so as to satisfy our Reason about it: and yet, in its whole constitution, palpably fathers itself upon some first beginning. Our Reason therefore compels us to look out to some *supreme Beginning*, that gave the first rise to all things we see, and set them first on work. A man
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begets a man, and that man was begotten by another man; but where is the first man, to beget, that was not begotten, nor brought forth in the common way of generation? For such, our Reason tells us, by this visible course of propagating the VWorld there must needs have been. 'Tis utterly impossible (in the way we see men begotten) there should ever have been any men in the VWorld without some first man. Our Reason is lost in the circle of one mans begetting another, without some *first man* that was not begotten. 'Tis non-sense to say, that one man begat another from eternity; because that one mans begetting another, directly relates to Time, Beginning, and Priority, which are all perfectly destructive to the notion of *Eternity*, and cannot be originated there. Sometimes *Aristotle* himself confesseth, there must be a first cause, and that infinity of causes is a monstrous absurdity. Either the *Atheist* must confess, that this course of generation does point us to some first rise and beginning of it, and cannot be supposed, by our Reason, to be without it; and then there must be some *first man*, that must begin the natural way of propagating Mankind; and that *first man* could not be begotten by any other; for then he could not be the first;

first; for that rule is true, *Primo non est prius*: and if so, that first man must either cause himself, or be caused by something above and before himself. To say the first I have shewed is an absolute contradiction; to say the latter, is to bring us regularly to God. If the *Atheist* denies that there was any beginning of things, or any first in generation; but saies, that the *World* is eternal, and the way of its generation is eternal likewise; I shall plainly refute him, as rendring himself grossly absurd, and that several ways. First, he begs a thing for granted to be, and must take it so to be, which he never saw, nor can have any assurance of. The eternity of the VWorld, and the succession eternal of generation and corruption, is not only unreasonable for any man to believe, but impossible for any man to know. 'Tis unreasonable to believe, because our selves, and all we converse with, have a *visible beginning* and ending, and manner of production; which directly fathers it self upon some first beginning; and could not have its rise from eternity. For whatever begins and ends, to say it was eternal in that course, is to say plainly, there was eternal beginning, and eternal ending, which is to affirm a most ridiculous contradiction. And 'tis as impossible for

any man to know, unless he knew himself eternal: and then he must know himself to be (which is impossible) contrary to what he really is: or else there must have been some *eternal Tradition*, from one to another, of the *Worlds* eternity, which neither *is* nor ever *yet was*. But the clearest and most undeniable Proof, that the World, in its present being, could not be eternal, (which it must necessarily have been, if it be eternal) will thus arise. The visible way by which the World is carried on, is by a course of generation and corruption: but such a course is impossible to be eternal; and that for these Reasons.

First, *Generation and Corruption suppose an uneven succession, a rising and falling*; which is impossible in that which is eternal; for that which is properly eternal, is incapable of bounds, and includes infiniteness in its intrinsic and formal reason. And where things are infinite, there can be no cadencies in the manner of their existence. And this regulates their operation. For all things act and work according to their being and manner of existence. But now, if things do infinitely generate, and infinitely corrupt, as on the supposition of the *Worlds* eternal self-existence they must be

be said to do, they must infinitely be, and infinitely not be, which is plainly destructive to an Eternal Being; yea, to any Being at all. Again, whatsoever is infinite, must needs be perfect; and *evenly* so, because it is *infinitely* so. If there were an infinite succession in Generation, no generable matter could ever be deficient, or ever miss in its proper Generation: which experience daily shews us it does. If all the generable matter, and the generable quality be infinite, (which it must be, if there be infinity in Generation) then they must perpetually continue the same *operation* without a possibility of falling in their proper kind. The truth of this will thus appear; either Generation, in its quality, was infinitely perfect, or *not*; if you say *not*, you make *Imperfect Infinite*, which cannot be; if it were, then it must needs *continue* so; there can never be any miscarriage in Generation, where Generation is *Infinite*. That which did infinitely operate *any* way, must needs perfectly operate *that* way, and so infallibly continue to operate the same way.

Secondly, *Whatever is supposed Infinite, must be supposed entirely compleat and perfect*. Nothing that is imperfect can be Infinite; for you must then suppose, that either *all* that is Infinite is imperfect, or *part* of

of it. If all, then there could never have been any thing perfect in any kind; for whatsoever *is* (if you suppose infinite) must needs be whatever *was*, or else be derived from whatever was. If part only be *imperfect*, then Infiniteness must be divided into Perfection and Imperfection, which is impossible. For wheresoever there is Infiniteness, there must needs be *Identity*. Whatsoever had an Infinite *Being*, must needs have a perfect Being; because whatsoever did Infinitely exist, has the highest perfection of Being: for infinitely to be, is the highest perfection of *Being*; and where that highest intrinsic perfection of *being* is, it necessarily swallows up all other perfection into it self, and there can never be wanting any lower perfection belonging to Being. Infinity in Being comprehends necessarily all Perfection in Being. Upon this ground, *Generation* and *Corruption* can never be Infinite; Corruption cannot be annexed to any thing Infinite; Infinite is the top of perfection, and Corruption the bottom of all imperfection. The corruption of any thing is the total ending of that thing, as such a *Compositum*; according to that true Maxim in Philosophy, *Id quod semel corruptum est, non posse eodem numero naturæ viribus restitui*. If a Stick be burnt into

ashes

ashes, I am sure the form and composition of the Stick is dissolved; and when a *Candle* expires into smoke, and that smoke into Air, the form of the Candle, and the being of it as a Candle, is gone. I leave such to find out all the same individual parts of the *Stick* in the *Ashes*, and all the wax and the thred of the Candle in the Smoke of it, who tell you they are there, but lie in *small masses*, and *first Concretions*, that are not discernable by the most acute sense.

The Atheist will, here, no way advantage himself, by the objection he usually makes: which is this; saies he, *When any thing corrupts, the matter of which that thing was made, still remains, 'tis the form and composition of that thing, that is only corrupted, and so annihilated; the World loseth nothing of the matter it had in it before, by such corruption*—Let the Atheist have all this granted, yet it no way conduceth to his purpose. For I will ask him but this question, *How was the matter of the World infinitely existing?* If it were infinitely existing in this way of generating and corrupting particular forms, then he falls flat with the stroke of this argument; for then the World must needs, be *infinitely beginning*, and *infinitely ending*, which is the height of contradiction; and (in all visible forms

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and beings, of which the World consists) infinitely something, and infinitely nothing. For it was infinitely generating them, and infinitely corrupting them; for corrupting is a part of the World, as well as generating: and where the whole is Infinite, all the parts must needs be Infinite too: according to that general Maxim agreed by all *Philosophers, that all the parts of an Infinite are Infinite*. If this generating matter of the World did infinitely exist before it did operate in Generation and Corruption, then Generation and Corruption had a time when they were not: and so are not Infinite. Nor is the World, then, *Eternal*; for it has not then ever been, in the posture it now is. This lies plain against the *Atheist*; let him take the matter of the World to be in what kind of Composition he will: either with *Aristotle*, and those of his way, who say, the Elements, when they make up a composition, lose themselves, and are dissolved, both in substance and quality, into somewhat they constitute, which is not themselves. Or else with those of the *Atomical* way, who say, that the *particles* of things are in all mixtures of humane nature, only *apposed* each to other, without any loss of their own proper natures; either way, the thing formed, in the form and composition of

of it, is, by Corruption, totally *mulled* and destroyed.

Thirdly, a succession of the World by Generation and Corruption, could never be Infinite, *because it necessarily supposeth Priority and Posteriority*. Nay, 'tis visible to our senses and our reason, that it has *priority* and *posteriority* in it: which belong purely and peculiarly to *time*, and cannot be applied to what is Infinite. To say that two things that depend each upon other, and cause each other, are both eternal in that causality, is absurd; because, in such a *Causality*, they could not be both at one time, which all eternal things necessarily are. We see by our common experience, that a thing cannot corrupt in one form, and generate into another, at one and the same time. If it should do so, and that course were eternal, it will unavoidably follow, that the World (as to all generated Beings) was Infinitely something, and Infinitely nothing.

Fourthly, *Things that everlastingly were, could never come under any confinement or regulation of time*. *Plato* in his *Timæus*, discoursed largely of this: [Things that were eternally so, could never come under the mutations and change of time; which we see all things now do. 'Tis time brings into

into Corruption, and Time brings into Generation. Whatever was eternal *a parte ante*, must needs be so *a parte post*, and run an even and uninterrupted course. An eternal thing can never be stopt by time.] If to evade this, the *Atheist* will say, that every thing still is as it ever and eternally was, (which he must say) then plainly he affirms, that time and all the accidents, vicissitudes, and effects of it, are eternal too; for if all things, now subject to the regulation of Time, were everlastingly so, then Time must needs be everlasting too; which is to come to the dregs of all contradiction.

Fifthly, *Whatever is eternal can never alter it self, nor its own form, nor be subject to alteration.* Because whatever did eternally exist, did necessarily exist as it eternally was; all eternal things must needs be *unchangeable*. If matter abstracted from Generation were eternal, it could then never alter it self, and come into the round of Generation and Corruption: For then 'twere not eternal. If matter be said to be eternal in Generation and Corruption, the answer has been given, 'tis impossible they should be both eternal; for then they must be both existing together: which is a contradiction; as much as to say, a thing *is*, and *is not*, at the

the same time. Generation of one Being by corruption of another, supposeth another Being precedent to it. Corruption of *one Being*, produceth the Generation of another. But 'tis utterly impossible, that any Being (that ever was eternally a Being) should ever turn into Corruption, and so cease to be such a Being in time, as it eternally had been. And if matter, abstracted from Beings and forms in such a way, were eternally matter, it must needs eternally so continue.

Sixthly, *If the World be Eternal, it cannot possibly have in it self any inherent intrinsic defect about its being so*; That is, a thing cannot be imagined to have so, that is eternal; especially a direct relation to an Original which is destructive to the notion of Eternity. Whatsoever is *eternal*, must needs carry an evidence past question, of its entire existing by it self; because what is eternal must needs have perfection in its Existence, and be totally *independent* from all other things in reference to its own Being. But the *V*World it self confutes all imaginable *Atheism* about this point, because, while we look no further than the *V*World for it self, we are at a perfect loss for a first Cause, and a first Mover in every thing. The World (in this visible defect) is

is its own *negative* to its own Eternity; for whatsoever I can, with any good reason, imagine eternal, I must see to be without *cause*, without *dependence*, without *beginning*, and a thing that entirely exists by it self; but 'tis evident, there is no one part nor piece of the World that is so. And if you say, the whole frame of the World (in this way you see it) was eternal; you must make all things relating to Time, Beginning and Ending, to Corrupting and Generating, to be eternal too. For if the *whole* of the World be (in the course it now keeps) eternal, then all the *parts* and *methods* of that general course must necessarily be so too; and then we arrive at the highest absurdity, and the utmost of all contradictions. If we consider the several stages the World takes in Ages and Generations; if the World have been eternal, such Ages and Generations must have been eternal too. And then this will plainly follow, (which is not possible to be) that there is inequality in Infiniteness, and that one Infinite may be of *one size*, and another Infinite of another; for so we palpably see Ages and Generations to be. Nor can the *Atheist* ever avoid this, unless he will say, that the end of a Generation is as soon as the beginning of it; for else they cannot be both eternal. Take any

any one Generation; if you admit it to begin and end, it cannot be Infinite, unless I believe that to be Infinite, which I see past, and which I see begin. A Generation a thousand years hence cannot be upon the same terms of Infiniteness with the present Generation. And yet it cannot be denied, that all Infinitenesses are the same Infinity, or else they could not be Infinite. The truth is, that where there are periods, changes, alterations, beginnings, and endings, 'tis ridiculous to talk of Infinity; and yet the World is filled with nothing else. And had the World it self been Infinite and Eternal, with the knowledge that is in it, and in the posture we see it; however individuals had failed, there must needs have been an *Eternal Knowledge* in the World of its own *Eternal existence*, which would easily have ended, (nay, have prevented) all Discourses of this nature.

The Atheist usually objects in this matter, and pleads for the Worlds Eternity, by urging that *maxim* of *Aristotle*, so much renowned by him, that he says, all *Philosophers* did agree to it; which is, that *ex nihilo nihil fit*, out of nothing, nothing can be produced. And therefore they infer from thence, either an eternity in the World, or in some pre existing Matter. I will

will not say of this principle, as was said of one of *Euclid's* first *Demonstrations*, that it was so plain, an Ass could not miss it. But I may very well say, He must be a Great one that denies it. But yet it gives the Atheist no help at all. For when *Ocellus* and *Aristotle* argued from this, they looked no further than the World, than bare matter, and the natural course of production the VWorld is now in; and if we respect only matter, this maxim is undeniably true, [That no matter can be produced, but by some other matter.] If the Atheist will beg the question, and say, there is nothing above or beside this World, I confess the maxim is undeniably true, as it relates to matter. We are not speaking how the World exists within it self only, but how the VWorld it self came to exist: and when we prove a supreme Being above the World this maxim is out of doors as to the Atheists purpose; and is no way destroyed or denied, by saying, [God first made the matter of the World out of no other matter, and so out of nothing;] if you respect only matter for he made it by himself, in whom all things are existing, and have their first Being *tanquam in origine*, and in *prima causa*. 'Tis absurd to say, an Infinite Being, that has all things existing virtually in himself

himself, made any thing out of nothing: and yet (if you respect only actual matter) he made all actual matter out of no matter, but potentially by himself, who does not consist of matter. And when we say, all things were made of *nothing*; *Nothing*, [by a supposition, supplies the place of the term from whence, and not of the matter whereof they were made. If we look then no further than this World, and only to that, nothing can be produced but by matter and motion, because there is nothing in it but matter and motion: and therefore, to say, any thing were caused any other way, were to say [something were caused by nothing] which were impossible. But if we prove a supreme Being above the World, 'tis no destruction to this maxim, to say, that matter and motion it self were caused out of no other matter and motion; yet not from nothing, but from the *active potentiality* of such a supreme and Infinite being, that can, from himself, cause and produce whatsoever is possible to be caused and produced; who (being without all cause, and above all cause) may well be supposed to be the author of all Causes. So that this maxim determines the main question no way; but may be an appurtenant to it, and very well solved either way.

Having

Having thus endeavoured to make those two first things proposed, evident; First, *That things could not make or cause themselves:* And that the *World could never be its own Original.* And Secondly, *That nothing in the World, nor the whole of the World it self, could be without cause, and so be eternal.* I shall proceed to prove the third thing proposed, which was, *that the World was caused by something before it, and above it:* and that there is one supreme eternal Being which we call GOD, that did cause and make the World. And this I make good several ways.

First, *The universal agreement and consent that has been amongst Mankind, in all Places, Times, and Ages, in this matter,* all concurring in the existence of a Deity, strongly affirms this. Where was there (by record of experience) any people, in any Nation under the Sun, found, that did not pay some homage to the notion of a *Deity*? Where did ever avowed *Atheism* possess any part of the World, or fix its habitation? The whole World have ever subscribed their subjection to a superiour Being. All the Idolatry and Polytheism, that has been in the World, has been founded in this; for, though their Worship hath not been rightly directed,

directed, and their homage not regularly paid where it became due, yet this General Principle still lay uppermost in the spirits of mankind; [*That a Worship was to be performed, and a Homage to be paid, to somewhat that was before them, and is above them.* You may as soon find a Nation without their Souls, as without their Gods. Nay, they would set up a *Leek*, an *Onion*, a *Calves*, or an *Oxe*, or any creature to subject themselves to a supreme Deity by; and make it a *medium* to vent that pressing sense of a subjection to *somewhat above them*, rather than not do it. Men would have an Altar to an *unknown God*, rather than none: which, when they had nothing visible, declares a pure innate principle to *somewhat above them.* They were so filled with such an apprehension, that they would have a Deity for *every thing*: for their Corn and their Wine, and every thing they dealt with. The *Romans*, by that method, had multiplied their Gods to above *thirty thousand*: and other Nations not much behind them. Which can speak no other thing unto us, than that men saw somewhat of a Deity in themselves and every thing else, under whose rule and dispose all things lay subjected, and in whom they lived and moved, and had their being. Nor would they undertake any thing, in *Peace* or

War, private or publick, without a previous application to a Deity: whose right to dispose of them, and all their actions, they did thereby fully own and assent to. If we enquire into the true and primary grounds of this, we shall find them to lie in three things. *First*, The universal exercise of the Reason of mankind, about themselves and all they saw in the World, necessarily fixed in them this Conclusion, *That there must be a first Cause, and a supreme beginner of things*: The general Reason of the World has center'd in this, and proceeded upon it as an universal *Maxim*, agreeing to the truth of our natural faculties.

Secondly, *All mankind live and exist with an instinct of a Deity in their very nature and being*. A God runs in the veins and blood of men. So saith Cicero, *In omnium animis Deorum notionem impressit ipsa Natura. De N. Deor. l. 1.* We have discovered parts of the World, where men have lived without clothes, and without most humane circumstances that attend mankind; but never any without some God. God has stamped a character of himself upon us in our very make. He has *made us in his own image*: We can never run away from *that* no more than we can take leave of our selves, and shake hands with our own Beings. Whatever God, the

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wife Maker has made, they carry the marks of him about them. But to Man especially he has secured his claim, in his very *Composition* and *Constitution*. Nor is this a supposition begged and taken for granted (like an *Atheists Hypothesis*), but a thing evidently so. The fears and hopes of all men are naturally guided to somewhat above them. When Men are in *danger*, they naturally run to their God. Man in all his fears and sorrows naturally shelters himself under a supreme Being above him. He soon finds himself at the utmost confines of his own protection: but sits not down there, still looks further and higher. The workings of his soul (as well as the form of his body) are still upward; they have a divine tendency. Extremities are this Truth's opportunities. Though the *Atheist disputes*, yet he cannot, sometimes, forbear to *tremble*. The notion of a Deity has made Mankind, in all ages, fall before it. Would the Atheist be but so true to himself as to confess it, his own fears sometimes confute his unbelief, and his own unavoidable practice forbid his principles. When the messengers of Death come to treat with him, they will bring him *tidings of another World*; and awaken him with apprehensions of that Deity he has so mock'd at. If there were nothing beyond this

World, and on the other side the grave, mens thoughts of futurity were very vain: and the trouble of most men were easily cured; they might not only possibly, but easily, make themselves what they seem to be, and what they have really a mind to be.

Thirdly, Another ground of this may be reasonably supposed to be, *an universal tradition amongst men, not only of God's making the World, but of God's sometimes appearing to, and conversing with the VWorld.* Which he hath often done, and given a witness to himself that way. We may not only reasonably imagine it a thing to have been, but we cannot with any good reason imagine it not to have been, that such things should not be told from one to another, and run in a channel of universal tradition. VVe cannot believe, but that *Adam* and *Eve* told the story of the VWorlds original to their posterity. And three men might carry it far: *Methuselah* lived with *Adam* 243 years; *Shem* lived with *Methuselah* 98 years before the flood; and *Isaac* lived 50 years with *Shem* after the flood; and died but 10 years before the people went into *Egypt*. God has often made himself known to the World. And not only the thing it self, but the manner of it must needs be a thing of that remark; that the story of it could never die in

in a whisper. *Sacrificing* was a thing God revealed, in a supernatural way, to *Adam*; and we see the whole World filled with the practice of it, by the tradition of it from him: for it was spread all the World over in such places, where it could not be received from the Practice and institution of it amongst the *Jews* afterwards. Sacrifices in themselves must needs be supernatural, because they are purely relating to Christ: and so must needs be revealed from God; and could not be such a thing, as *Adam* at first should invent and find out by natural light; and all the World should, by the same, afterwards agree in, as a way of Worship, and a thing acceptable to God. Though in after-ages (as usually it fares with Tradition) the manner and circumstances of things by their often relation, might be varied and worn out: yet that main thing [that there was a God, and that he had sometimes in an especial manner, made it known to some part of the World, that there was so] was likely to be permanent in all Generations. And yet Tradition was another thing in those times when (as Learned Men observe) three men, *Methuselah*, *Shem* and *Isaac*, could carry on a Tradition from the Creation of the World, till within ten years of the People of *Israels* going into *Egypt*, which

was very many hundreds of years.

Two *Objections* the Atheist is usually fraught with against these things.

First, (saies he) *'Tis not true in fact, that there hath been this general consent to the truth of a Deity*: My self, and many others deny it; and that spoils the *universality* of it.

Secondly, *This fear of a Deity (which, you say, the VWorld is so possessed withall) is nothing but what some cunning men have foisted into the VWorld, upon politick grounds, and the better to serve their own turns, and keep the World in subjection and awe.*

For the *first*, How little does it weigh down the opposite scale to this weighty Truth? If there be some *Ideots*, and some mad-men in the World, shall not Mankind be denominated *Rational*? If there be some *Torys* and *Moss-Troopers*, and such who will come under no Government; were it reasonable therefore to say, that *Government* is not such a thing as the World have agreed in, and an Institution Universally founded in Natural Light? Though some men are born blind, yet *Eye-sight*, I hope is universal. VVere it any way reasonable to be endured that the plainest Demonstrable Proposition in *Mathematicks*, should be denied to be universally true all the World over, because some men will deny it? which, if mens civil interests,

interests, and worldly concerns were as much engaged about, as they are about other things, there is no doubt but they would; and be as positive and vehement in their negation, as they are in denying other things, merely because they would not have them to be. If this Objection were of any force, 'twere in the power of any men (either sottishly ignorant, or perversely peevish) to deny the universality of any, the plainest, either Moral or Divine Truth, when either they *cannot* or *will not* understand it. The Universality of any thing does not lie in every individual persons reception of it: it depends not upon individual assents; but in that even and true proportion it bears to the *Universal Reason* of the World; and so it incorporates it self into the universal Principle that rules the World. Whatever is, in it self, truly reasonable, is universally reasonable, because Reason is universal. Let never so many deny, that *three Angles in a Triangle, are equal to two right Angles*, or never so few understand it; yet 'tis an universal Truth, and must be so acknowledged. No absurd thing could ever come into the World but that it has some Authors. *Aristotle* in his *Metaphysics*, l. 4. c. 4. tells us, there were some that affirmed, *A thing might be, and might not*

be at the same time. Did that any way overthrow the generality of that maxim in Reason [That nothing could be, and could not be, at the same time :] *Gicero*, in his Book *de Natura Deorum*, has long since told us, *That nothing could be so absurd that had not some Philosopher for its Patron*. That we call Universal Consent in Mankind, must not be built upon every individual Consent; for then 'twere in the power of any one man, never so foolish or corrupt, to overthrow it; and considering the various defects and interests of Mankind, there could never be any such thing. Nor ought we, with any good Reason, to denominate Universal from every particular, unless every particular man in the world were infallible in his judgment. If ever there were such a thing in the World as *Universal Consent* to any thing, (wherein mens *interests* lay variously concern'd) it has been in this case. It was never any mans interest to deny, that two and two make four: but it has been, and is mens corrupt interest, to deny *there is a God*; that so they might live as they list. But yet, notwithstanding that the *Notion of God and Religion* has curb'd men in their appetites, and been directly opposite to their inclinations; yet it has prevailed in the World with an universality *superlative*

to

to what any one thing can pretend to. How will the *Atheist* speed by trying his Principles in the World, if he denies Universality? Either he must go to the *major part*, or the *melior part*. If to the *major part*, he has millions against an individual; If to the *melior part*, all the Religious, Just, Righteous Men that have ever been, refer to an Eternal Rectitude in a Deity, and have been an united party, since the World began, against him.

For the second Objection, [That this fear of a Deity in men is a thing *artificially infused into them, upon politick grounds, the better to keep them in subjection*; and is a Lye imposed upon the World.]

The Answer lies easie. First, This must be said to it; 'tis a thing begg'd and taken for granted, without the least *probation* in any sort. The *Atheist* is wholly precarious in it. After what manner was this *Cheat* put upon the World? and at what time? and where are the authors on it? who ever gave any account of those things? and no man could ever know them to be a *Cheat*, but he must be able to give an account of them to himself and others. Is it a thing likely, or to be credited, that a general

neral *Cheat* should bow down the backs of all Mankind? and induce so many doubts, and fears, and troubles amongst them, and give an interruption to the whole course of their corrupt living, and that there should be no account of it? That they should never discover it? nor make enquiry into it? but that it should be everywhere swallowed, and taken as a thing granted? Let me ask the *Atheist* this question? Where is there to be found a man that does not carry this very fear about himself, which he says, was imposed as a *Cheat* upon others? When he can find me a man, that has, at no time, and upon no occasion, any *fear about him*, arising from *somewhat above him*; I will acknowledge, that man was capable of attempting to put it as a *Cheat* upon another. But if he felt it himself, and his own experience made it a Truth to himself, he could never intend it as a *Cheat* to another. Besides, there must be a general concurrence in all parts of the World, to set this *Cheat* on foot: and it must universally take, and have the same success in every place, and with all sorts of persons. For we find this fear of a God in every place where we go: And yet a vast number of places have been found out in the World, that never conversed with any other people, nor received any
kind

kind of Manners or Principles from them. *Religion is*, as *Justinian* and the *Civilians* say truly, *the general and universal Law of Nations*. The most barbarous people in the World have often made Laws to put such to death as denied all Religion. 'Tis boasted of *Epicurus*, by that poetical *Epicure*, *Lucretius*, that he was the first that opposed Religion, and affronted the Gods. If he were so, then it seems, they had the universal and quiet possession of the World before.

The *Atheist* will needs have you believe, that *Religion came first into the World by some accidental FRIGHT*: and Cunning Men improved that, to make Men believe there was *somewhat above them*. When Men heard it *thunder*, and were afraid, then they were told, that there was some body above, that was angry, and spake loud; and so they were couzened into a belief of a Deity.—But I would the *Atheist* would consider, that if the notion of a Deity had been built only upon such a foundation, it would soon have fallen. For when men came to discover the natural cause of *Thunder*, they would have abhorred such a *Cheat*, and detested and scorned the notion of a
God,

God, ten times the more. 'Twas the true fear of a Deity upon which all other things have operated. If men had not found it, they could never have made it. Men may mislead it, but could never generally create it.

But that which ought to fix us in a satisfaction in this matter, and to prove this grand Objection of the *Atheist* to be most absurd; and that Religion, and the fear of a Deity could never be a *Cheat* imposed upon the World; is, that it lies directly opposite to common Reason to believe, that such a thing as Religion should be introduced, as the highest and most supreme concern of the World, and to which all others were to yield; and to which all mens inclinations (though they lay directly contrary to it) were to bow and conform, that had neither any *rational demonstrations* externally to approve it self by, to the Reasons of men, nor at first found any principles within them that naturally inclined them to such a thing. The *Atheist* falls (in his objection) under this unavoidable *Dilemma*: Either Religion had good Reasons, and some real Grounds first to induce it, or it had not; if it had, then 'twas a real and true thing, and the world

World was no way abused in it; and the *Atheist* is gone in his objection. If it had not, (which by the *Atheists* principles, it had not: for, if there be no God, it never could have any) then you must believe, that all mankind suffered a notion to reign over them most cross and opposite to their inclinations, that had not the least truth in it, nor the least thing belonging to it that could give it any reasonable probation; nor had at the first, any natural innate interest in mens minds (but quite the contrary) to give it any (much less a total and general) reception amongst men. He that will believe this might possibly be, must, in consequence, believe that *Mankind is not rational*; nor that the World has such a thing as Reason that governs it, for 'tis to believe the World to swallow a thing as reasonable, that has not the least evidence of Reason to be given of it. Whatsoever *Cheat* mankind could attempt one upon another, must be by the use of their Reason: and 'tis not to be imagined that Reason could invent a *Cheat* that Reason should not discover; and that a thing false should be made (by the help of Reason) so seemingly true, that Reason, at one time or other, should not be able to detect it. For, first there is the universal Reason of all persons

persons and all ages against some particular mens reason: and then, there is a lie to be proved, and that to be made appear true and reasonable (which is not in the least so) by some private mens reason, against the reason of the whole World; that is, some few men must be able to persuade the World there is a God; which (upon the *Atheists* principles) they could not only never shew them, but never be able to give them any rational account, by any *effects or operations* of him, that there was such a thing, and gain an universal assent to it.

In short, some men must tell the World, for their own private advantage, that there was a God; and the whole World must straight be frighted with it, and believe it; and beget their children, and their children beget others again, and so on, with the same *fright* and belief of what they never saw, nor had the least ground reasonably to believe. Where is the man that can shew, that the World ever yet had a *publick Cheat* attempted upon it, but that in the same age it was contradicted, and the Cheat made manifest? Take it in *Mahumetanism*, or whatever you will. If there be no God, the ground of all Religion in fact is false; and all the deductions from it, mistakes and

Non-

Nonsense. He that will side with the *Atheist*, and befriend him in this, must imagine that some (we know not who, in ages past all records, we know not when) should, upon the account of their own private ends, be able to befool the Whole World; and introduce a thing as the Supreme part of the World, that had no reality in it, and so could not have the least reasonable account given of it; and yet that the whole World should receive it, and submit to it. He that can embrace this foppery, and believe it, I would never doubt to make him confess, against *Euclide* [*That a part is greater than the whole*;] and bring him to justify the highest *Nonsense* that absurdity it self can attain to.

A second Argument to conduct us towards God, and to prove that he made the World, shall be this; *The natural rectitude, and innate harmony of the World*; and the due subordination of things one to another, and to the whole of the World, all things concentrating in one common end. This must needs come from an eternal Rectitude, and a supreme Director, the wisest of all Workmen and Contrivers, if you admit Causes superiour to Effects.

Can

Can you perswade your Reason, that the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars were by *chance* fixed in the Firmament: and that they do by *chance* keep a constant uninterrupted course: and make constant day and night, and a certain fixed determination of all times and seasons: Can the *Atheist* (without impudent madness) perswade himself, that *Seed-time* and *Harvest*, and all the regular subordination of things one to another, in their proper uses and dependencies, are owing to nothing but *chance*: Either they were so Eternally, or so in Time. If eternally, they could not be by Chance; for *Chance cannot be Eternal*: for, whatsoever was eternally so, could have no possibility of Chance, whether it should be so, or not so. *Chance* is a Fiction, a *Phantasm*, a thing without a real Being: there is no such thing as Chance ever was or can be, either in things temporal, or eternal. A thing that is by Chance, must be such a thing as comes to pass without the necessary enforcement of any certain cause: A thing that might have been, or might not have been, or might any way have been otherwise than it is. But there is no such thing now in the *World*; and whatever was eternally so, was ever so, and without a possibility of ever being otherwise.

wife so, or of ever being not so. If they come to be so in time, they must either make themselves so, or be made so: *make themselves so*, I have proved already, they could not; nothing can be the original cause of it self; and therefore they must needs be made so: And if *made so*, then they could not come by *chance to be so*; Because the *World* consisting of causes and effects, one thing still causing another, and nothing without cause, there must necessarily and naturally be a Cause of these causes: and whatsoever caused these causes, must needs be a Cause, and the highest Cause. If the *World* were ever caused by any thing but it self, it could never be by *Chance*; because whatsoever causeth any thing, destroyes the being of it by *Chance*. For if it had a cause, there was a reason why it came to pass; and if there were a reason why it came to pass, then it did not come to pass by *Chance*. And if the *World*, in the first matter of it, brought forth it self by *Chance*, there could then never have been any thing but *Chance* in it: for Chance can produce nothing but Chance; there could have been no such thing as a certain Cause in it. Now we evidently see the contrary, that there is no such thing as *Chance* in the *World*. The whole

World is a great bundle of Causes and Effects. When we say a thing happens by *Chance*, we say and mean no more, but that it happened *unexpectedly*, and that we do not at present see the Cause of it. That we call *Lottery*, is nothing else, but taking the visible Effects of Causes we purposely conceal from our selves. He that shuffles Cards, does not know what Game he shall have, because he purposely hides the Cause from himself, and takes only the Effect. But no Man can therefore think there is such a thing as Chance in that: for if he looked upon the Cards, as he shuffled them, he would find his own disposal of them in such places, was the Cause of his Game. There is a certain fixed regularity in the Course of every thing, and a genuine dependance of one thing upon another. Nothing moves, nothing operates any way, but as 'tis moved and caused: which unanswerably shews, That nothing in the World hath any motion or operations *innately* and *primarily* in it self, but comes all from a first Mover and infinite Cause of every thing. Whatsoever we see come to pass, though at the present we cannot point out the Cause, yet we see enough visible in it, to assure us *it has some Cause*. He that cannot give a punctual demonstrative Reason

son for the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea, yet sees enough in it (by the constancy of it, the certain time it keeps, and the due correspondency it holds to some of the Heavenly Bodies) to satisfy him, that there is a Natural Cause of it, and a Reason to be given for it; and that 'tis not possible to be a thing by Chance; but is a thing linked into the round of the World, and bears its proportion to the general Subordination and Harmony of things. If the *Atheist* be so ridiculously foolish as to say, that all that we see, and call Order and Method, is nothing but *Chance*; and that every thing happens still by *Chance* so to be as we see it to be; he must either palpably confute himself, or else deny all the necessary Causes and Effects we see in the World; and tell us, That what we see constantly to be, (and never was known nor seen otherwise to be; and, in the reason of the Things themselves must needs be so, and cannot be otherwise;) is a thing of *meer Chance*, and so may happen to be otherwise: That is, he must say, that Rain must not necessarily moisten the Earth, but may perhaps scorch it, and burn it up; and that the Sun must not necessarily heat me, but may perhaps cool me, and chill me; and that Summer is not necessary

necessary to come as it does, but may chance to come in the place of Winter, and Winter in the place of Summer. For if these things have no foundation but Chance, they may, by Chance, be otherwise than now they are. The Rational Soul abhors Chance; it makes a Reason of no use. 'Tis strange, *Chance* should frame the World and frame the highest Principle in it with a perfect antipathy to it self, and to be of no use at all to it! For 'tis to no purpose, to think, reason, or debate about what comes by Chance. It forbids all foresight, and all rational Deductions; and that supreme acting of a wise man, *to fit and suit Means to Ends*.

Besides, there is this further evidence of God to us, in this *rectitude* we find in the frame of the World; *That direct Contraries* (and such as are in their natures destructive one to another) *are over-ruled to a perfect Harmony and Coalition*, in the propagation of the World. How could ever contrary elements of Fire and Water (how could all other natural Opposites) be reconciled, and made to consist together in the composition of things, but that there is something above them, that over-rules them as he pleases? 'Twere utterly impossible, without that ever to be. 'Tis evident likewise

likewise by this, that the World hath not been for ever; for these *Contraries*, of which the matter of the World consists, could not have been *eternal*; *Contrariety* cannot be in Eternity. And therefore those *Philosophers* heretofore were justly condemned of folly and ignorance, who, when they could not resolve the Doubt [*How Evil should first come into the World, if there was but one God, and that one God Infinitely good*]? fled to the refuge of this Assertion, *That there was an Eternal good Being, and an Eternal ill Being*, that equally from Eternity were the Authors of both Principles. Now that this is absurd, and that things contrary each to other, cannot be *Eternal*, seems plain by these three Reasons.

First, In direct *Contrariety* there must be *imperfection and deficiency*. For where two things are both perfect, they cannot be in *Contrariety*, unless perfection can oppose it self. 'Tis Imperfection makes Opposition. Every thing that is eternal, I have proved before, must needs be perfect. And things perfect cannot lie in *Contrariety* one to another, because, in *perfection* there is the height of *harmony*.

Secondly, *Opposition intends Destruction*. 'Tis the end of *Contraries*; where *Con-*
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aries are, each naturally strives to be predominant by destroying the other. Now things Eternal can never cease to be, nor to be otherwise than they ever were. Therefore such Contrariety can never be where there is Perfection: because things perfect cannot innately tend to Impossibilities; for that were the highest Imperfection. And here is an utter Impossibility in the End. For Eternal Things can never alter nor destroy each other. 'Twere to imagine Eternal Things eternally tending to destroy Eternity: than which nothing can be more impossible.

Thirdly, Whatever we suppose self-originated and eternal, must needs swallow up all Being and Perfection in it self; and so all other Beings must necessarily be derived from it; and so it can be but one. This visible experimented Truth, [*That all things in the World, though never so opposite in themselves, do all regularly and necessarily issue themselves into one common End: and that the World is a great piece of order and harmony;*] directly opposeth the grand Hypothesis of Epicurus who ascribes the World to meer Chance, and will have no other beginning of it, but a casual motion of certain small particles, which we call Atoms. The whole of his Principles is to make us believe,

believe, That there is an infinite Ultra-mundane Space, an infinite Inanity, where there are an infinite company of Atoms; and these Atoms infinitely possessed with an internal vigour called Gravity, which occasioned their eternal motion: and so, by their perpetual motion, and various agitation in that infinite Space, they came to meet and encounter each other: and by meer Chance and Hap of such Encounters, came into the Conjunction we see, and by that meer Chance made up this whole World, and moved and danced themselves into all visible Beings.—The ridiculousness of which precarious Notion, and wholly begg'd Supposition, I shall evidence by these Considerations following.

First, These Atoms, in this fancied Vacuity, were either temporally there, or eternally there. If temporally, then they were caused and must be placed there by somewhat before them and above them; and then we must come to Divinity. If eternally; then they must, of necessity, have been without alteration there still, and so eternally there. For whatsoever is Eternal, must necessarily be Unchangeable; for whatever Being was eternal, can neither cease to be as it was; nor can ever produce any other thing by varying its own form, and ceasing it self to be as it ever was,

was. For, suppose that *Atoms* lose not their own existence by any Being they constitute, yet I am sure, in that variety of Beings the World is filled with, if they consist of these *Atoms*, they are not in the same posture they were in, when they were moving and dancing up and down in that infinite space; so that by this Notion, here is an Infinite of two pieces visibly, besides how many more it may consist of, after. For these *Atoms* are said to be infinitely moving one while in the infinite space, and another while they are interrupted by meeting one another in that infinite Motion, and then they are turned into Bodies, and all parts of the World; and when those Compositions are dissolved, who can preface what will come of them then? So that things are made to be Infinite, and yet Changeable, which is impossible: for what was infinitely so, must ever continue to be so. Nor can any thing be infinite in Change: because, what infinitely was, was the highest perfection of being, and so can never alter nor change it self. Change is a perfect relative to Imperfection. Whatever is infinite has the highest Perfection: and to imagine then a change in what is Infinite, were to imagine a change from the highest Perfection; which is unimaginable and impossible.

Secondly,

Secondly, If the *dancing motion* of these *Atoms*, in this fancied space, did by Chance first dance the World into this *form*; and *caper'd* the Sun Moon, and Stars into their stations above us; and placed every thing in the posture it is in about us, and below us; what is the Reason these *Atoms* never danced themselves into any thing since? If they had an Eternal Motion in themselves; they must needs move still. Where is there any visible production by such a concourse of *Atoms*? 'Tis a Horse begets a Horse, and one thing begets another: Where is any thing made so by *Atoms*, as the World is said to be at first made by them? If *Atoms* still be the parts of all compositions, 'tis plain, they do not compound them in the same way they did at first. A Man that is begotten by another Man, and brought forth by a Woman, has surely another kind of make, than he had, that was made by a Chance-hit of some *Atoms* one against another, as they were whirling about in the Infinite space. And for that *Infinity of Worlds* that is produced (as *Epicurus* will needs have you believe) by the *infinity of Atoms* in the Infinite space, 'tis no other than an eminent piece of *Lunacy*, and a *Chimæra* very well agreeing to the rest of the *Atomical* Doctrine. For he can-

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not bring the least Reason to prove it, unless you let him first beg the Question, and grant him an *infinity of Atoms*, that so he may argue from an infinity of Matter, to an infinity of Worlds.

Thirdly, The casual Conjunction of these *Atoms* could not, by that Chance make the World ; because 'tis made with a principle of Reason : and they could not have induced such a Principle by any Chance, unless some way or other they had had it inherent in themselves before ; for nothing can transfer that to another, which it hath not it self. And if they had been possess'd with that principle of Reason, if *Epicurus* his *Atoms* had been rational *Atoms*, (and truly he might as well have begged and suppos'd them into Reason as Motion : for bare Matter can no more be proved to have an intrinsic Motion in it, which would make it absolutely necessary for all Matter to move at all times, than it can be prov'd to Think, Will and Reason ; and he that begs and takes things for granted without the trouble of proof, should take all that would serve his turn) I say, had *Epicurus* his *Atoms* been Reasonable *Atoms*, they would never have done any thing by Chance, because they had a *Superior Principle* to do it by ; they would never

ver have put that to the venture, which might have been made *certain*. Their own Principle would have instructed them not to have put that to the venture of Chance, whether it should be, or should not be, which, by Reason, might have been made certain to be. A Man that hath Eyes would never shut them, and go to discover colours by feeling. Every superiour Principle must needs act above an inferiour. Whatever did happen, by meer Chance, to Be, had a Power to Be, and by Reason might have been made certain to Be. How monstrously unreasonable is it to believe, that these *Atoms* (that had nothing in themselves but bare Matter and Motion, upon the best supposition) should produce in Man, and in nothing else, a *rational Soul* ! and that that in Man, which we call the rational Soul, should be nothing else but the more active and generous part of these *Atoms* ! which became so, by being more smooth and round than the rest ! which you must believe fell by Chance, all to the share of Men ; and no other Being had the hap to have any of them in their Compositions. We must also believe these *Eternal Atoms* to be some of one size, and some of another ; some of one quality, and some of another, and yet all *Eternal* : which is a contra-

contradiction to all Notion of Eternity.

Fourthly, Suppose (in these *Atoms*) Matter and Motion, the World could never come to be made fortuitously thereby. For, *First*, all Motion in every thing, must either be from a Superiour Mover, or from an innate and self-originated Principle of Motion in it self. If from a Superior Mover, then we come to God. If from an Innate Motion, that any thing hath in and from it self, that Motion must needs be Eternal: For nothing can move, that is not set on work, or that doth not infinitely set it self on work. If Motion have Beginning, it must own it self to some Beginner: if it have no Beginning, it must be Infinite and Eternal: and there needs no better or other Argument to prove that any Motion had a Beginning, than when we see it has an Ending; for as all Mechanick Motion, by its coming to an end, shews plainly it had a *primum movens*, and was set on work; so does all other Motion, by its perioding and ending, declare plainly, it had its beginning *ab extra*; and is not self-originated and Eternal: So that if the *Motion of these Atoms* came from a first Mover, then they came from a Cause; and their Motion must needs be regular and corresponding to that first Cause.

Cause. If they had no first Mover, then their Motion must be Eternal, as *Epicurus* sayes it is; and nothing, that moves Eternally, can move by Chance; because it must needs have the highest Perfection of Motion: And where that is, 'tis impossible to suppose any such thing as Chance. For whatever did eternally move, can never cease so to move; and so can have no such thing as Chance conversant about it. *Secondly*, Matter it self cannot be moved *fortuitously*, by Motion supposed inherent in it: that is utterly impossible; because all Matter determines its own Motion. Heavy things move downward, and cannot fortuitously move upward. Had there been nothing but Chance to cement the World, the *heavy* part would have been sure to have gone *downward*, and the *light* part *upward*; and they would never have met, nor pieced together. The Motion of things is determined in the nature of their Being. And therefore we cannot reasonably say, that bare Matter and Motion ever caused any thing by Chance; unless you will say, it caused every thing to be by Chance, just as it *must needs* be, and *necessarily* be, which is a contradiction. Who can believe *Chance* the Cause, and *Certainty* the Effect? We see all things moving in perfect order; and not only

only our Experience assures us of this, but our Reason shews us, it must necessarily so come to pass. For such Causes do produce such Effects suitable to the nature & being of things, and an intrinsic Causality and innate Dependence upon each other; which must needs be the Effect of the supreme and great Cause of all. Let any Man consider that noble Principle in Man, the *rational Soul*, with the suitableness of it to govern himself and the rest of the World; and how all things, in their being and dependency lie proportioned to such a superiority. Let him view the make of a Man and a Woman, and see how suitable, and how necessary they are one to another in their very composition; and how the *Male* and the *Female*, in all other Creatures, are adapted to propagate their own kind, and to be useful each to other; and the Instinct they carry about them so to be. Let him look upon the faces of Men and Women, and consider them; there never having been yet seen any two without some variety. Let him look above him, and below him, and round about him, and see what *harmony* there is between the Heavens and the Earth: how the well-being of the one depends upon the influence of the other; and how certain and regular those are, by which all

all Times and Seasons are exactly determined. Let him look upon the *Sea*, and consider how useful that is to the World, to introduce a Trade and Commerce among all Nations, and to make each one capable of enjoying the good of all the rest. Let him view the constant course of its Ebbings and flowings; and the standing Law of its *Boundaries*, whereby such a *mass of Waters* are still kept in one channel, and continued in their proper station. And when he has viewed these and a thousand things more, that lye obvious to his reasonable Contemplation; if he then think the composition of the whole Universe, and all the parts of it, and the grand *Oeconomy* that is in it, came from *nothing but meer Chance*, he renders himself a person fitter for *Bedlam* than *Disputation*. Yet such wretched shifts are men forced to fly to, when they are labouring to exclude the Notion of God, and banish a Deity out of the World.

The *Epicurean Atomist* falls plainly under the heavy strokes of several gross absurdities. *First*, He makes his *Atoms* (which are the matter of which he will have the World to consist) to move about in his *ultra-Mundane space*, without a tendency to a Center. Which is perfectly impossible, that any matter should move, by a Motion innate

innate in it, without tendency to some Center or other. He affirms, [his *Atoms* could never discontinue their Motion, but when they encountred other *Atoms*, and were, by that impulse, deflected into another course.] To believe this, were to deny one of the plainest experimental Truths in Philosophy; and to suppose Matter moving without either a *terminus à quo*, or a *terminus ad quem*. Secondly, He ascribes that to dull Matter, and senseless Motion, which we ascribe to God infinitely Perfect. For he supposes his *Atoms* infinite, and in an *infinite space*: And so he makes things mutable, and things imperfect, infinite. For if these *Atoms* had not been so, they must needs have continued without variation or change, as once they were, and (as he saies) eternally they were. Whatever he objects against us about the Infinity of God, with ten times more force he objects the same against himself, for the Infinity of his own *Atoms* and supposed *Inanity*. Thirdly, He makes more to arise out of his *Matter* and *Motion*, than is contained in the *Matter* and *Motion* themselves; which is the rational Soul of Man. Fourthly, He makes (*first*) eternal Causes to have chanceable Effects; and then those chanceable Effects to be the cause of all Certainty and

and Regularity. He makes Eternal Causes to have Chanceable Effects; for he saies himself, [*His Atoms, and his ultra-mundane space are Eternal, and the Motion of these Atoms eternal likewise in it:*] And the Effect of these Eternal Causes is, that by Chance they make this World; and this Chance, in making the World, hath produced all the Certainty, Constancy, Order, Beauty and Regularity of it. There cannot be Two things more ridiculously said, than first, to make Chance the Effect of an Eternal Cause, and so the most certain Cause; and secondly, to make Chance the Cause of all Order and Certainty. 'Tis as true to say, the Sun is the Cause of all Darkness; and Wisdom the true Mother of all Folly. Lastly, He makes Things to cause themselves; which is the supremest of all *nonsense*. For (saies he) *these moving particles, this Matter and Motion, make up the Universe*: And so, if there be nothing above them, they must needs make themselves the Universe. If this Matter and Motion be made and moved, 'tis not Eternal; if you suppose it is Eternal, then that which is Eternal varies it self into all Forms and Compositions; and so is not unchangeable, which all Eternal Things are. Although that which is Infinite may beget

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variety of other things distinct from its own being, as God himself doth; yet that which is Infinite cannot do so, by varying it self, which these *Atoms* do, and so become changable; which cannot be annexed to what is Infinite. When these *Atoms* turn themselves, by their motion, into Bodies, and all other parts of the World (supposing all the Principles of the *Atomical Philosophy*, that they destroy not themselves;) they alter the Form and Manner of their Existence; and so, I am sure, are not as they eternally were. Nor could they indeed be Eternal; because, had they been Eternal in the posture they were, they would have had Perfection in that posture, and so could never have changed from what was infinitely perfect. In short, therefore, either the World was Eternal in some *pre-existing matter* to what we see, (either *Atoms*, or what you will:) or it was Eternal just in the course we now see it. If it were Eternal in any *mere existing Matter*, that Matter must needs cease to be so, by varying it self into this World: unless you will make things changable and imperfect, Infinite, which is impossible. Whatever eternally was, must eternally remain as it was, or else 'tis not Eternal. 'Tis monstrously absurd to talk of a changable Eternity.

Eternity. If you take the other way, (to make the World Eternal just as we see it) you must unavoidably make Corruption, Generation and all parts of the round and course of the World, Eternal too; unless you admit *priority* and *posteriority*, which are plainly enough destructive to all notion of Eternity. If any thing had been unchangeable and unalterable, and caused other things distinct from it self, (as we say God does,) it had altered the case: but to say the World is Eternal, when every part that makes the whole of it self, and all the matter of the World is perpetually altering and varying, 'tis utterly impossible, without making the course of it in changes, in generating, and corrupting particular forms, eternal too. Though God created variety of creatures, that, several waies, alter and change; yet he (in his own Being) is unchangeable, and still the same he ever was. If he had dilated his own Being, and spread it into the variety of the World, and made the World out of himself, and subsisted only in it, it had been impossible he should have been eternal: because then, he would not now have been what he ever before had been.

A third Argument to prove that God

is, and that he made the World, is, *that witness, that he hath left to himself and his own Being, in the CONSCIENCES of men.* This is so safe, and so sure a way to bring us to God, that, unless we had seen him face to face, there could not have been any thing that could possibly have given us a clearer evidence of the Being of God, and of the Relation our own beings have to him, than this hath done. The understanding Faculty of Man is the noblest part of the World; and in that faculty God hath established the knowledge of himself. Conscience in a man, is nothings but the true result of his Understanding about himself, in reference to a supreme Being above him: Which (if there were no God) were to no purpose, and the noblest exercise of Man in his rational part would be wholly in vain; which *Aristotle* would not endure to have thought, of the meanest and lowest product of Nature. He rightly denied, that *Nature did the least thing in vain.* That we call *Conscience*, is not only seated in the Understanding of Man, but has a peculiarity in the exercise of that Understanding, purely relating to it self. For *Conscience* is not only an ability in the Understanding, (as 'tis relating to other mat-

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ters) when a Man will make use of it to determine his *Actions* and his Condition, in reference to God and a superiour Being: But Conscience carries, in its description, an innate instinct, and necessary inclination in the Understanding to operate this way; and to pass a continual Judgment upon a Mans self, in all a Man does, with reference to God, and that primary and supreme concern of pleasing Him, and corresponding to his Will. Can we suppose this great Wheel of the Understanding should move this way, without a first Mover? And move about nothing? Move in vain? Whence should this Principle in Man come? We find it written in fair Characters all the World over. Man sees nothing in the World, but what is inferior to him, and under his jurisdiction. If God had not been *Above*, there could never have been any such thing as Fear and Conscience *Below*. There could never have been an universal Fear of an *Invisible Nothing* in all rational Creatures. God and Conscience are perfect Relatives. How is it possible to believe a distinction of Good and Evil, and a Conscience about them (in order to Reward and Punishment from a Supreme Power) should be naturally inherent in every Man, as we find it is; unless some

Superior Power had made us, and fixed such Principles in us, by our first Constitution? How comes it to pass, that Good is preferred before Evil, when there is more visible in the World of the one than of the other, and Mens inclinations lie more to Evil than Good? But that God (in our very make) hath determined those things, and left an indelible Testimony in our own Souls about them. No Man can (if he would) think Evil to be better than Good, and put one in the place of the other; which shews plainly, that the Soul of Man relates to a Supreme Being that made him, and is above him. Can we believe, that all the exercise of Mens *Consciences*, in the Hopes and Fears we find fixed in them, about a condition after this life, to be meer *Delusions*? which they be, if there be no God. The Atheist himself, with all his skill, cannot disband his own Fears, nor run away from his own Conscience, no more than he can run away from himself: he finds seasons, wherein he smarts under the lashes of it. Conscience is such a thing, as is not (in the principle of it) *discoursed into Men*, but born with them. Nor can you ever discourse Men out of it; nor can a Man, at his pleasure, argue it from himself. The Soul of Man is constituted

constituted with a distinction of Good and Evil, in reference to a superiour Being, that has a supremacy over it. Every Mans own Breast is the proof of this: A Mans own Soul subscribes to it. Men are full of exercises of Conscience about things not punishable in this World, nor any way discernable here. A Man may as well deny that Love and Hatred are inherent in men, as that Conscience is inherent in them, and a reference to somewhat above them. A Man, by counterwork, may sooner get a conquest over any part of himself, than over that we call *Conscience*: because in every step he takes that way, whether he will or no, he is his own Executioner. Whither will the *Atheist* flee from himself, to find shelter against the force of this undeniable Argument?

Two things he usually recurs to, (and 'tis much the same defence he made against that universal Acknowledgement there hath been of a Deity in the World) First, sayes the Atheist [*This you call Conscience in Men, is nothing but Fear habituated in them by tales that were at the first told them, and so transferred from one to another, about invisible things.*] And secondly, *That it is not true, in fact, that all Men are Troubled with this we call Conscience; for*

many have no such thing, nor find any workings of it at all, in themselves.]

To the first, I answer. Conscience in Men could never be begotten in them by any *humane Contrivance*: because 'tis a thing can never be confined within any humane bounds. Other Men are so far from having the power over a Mans Conscience, that a Man cannot govern it himself. Conscience gives its evidence whether we like it or not. The work of Conscience is often to oppose a Man himself in the *violent emanations* of his own Will. If it had been at the first created by invented Fictions and Fables, those would have contained the *boundaries* of it: and by the same way Men were at the first possessed with it, they might more reasonably be supposed to be capable, at any time, of being delivered from it; because (upon the *Atheists* grounds) if there be no God, it was begotten by a Lye; and 'tis surely possible to be nulled by confessing the Lye and revealing the Truth. And yet we find, let men say as long as they will *there is no God*, Conscience will still abide.

Secondly, If Conscience had its first rise from

from Mens being possessed with Notions of feigned and pretended Deities, and *Non-entities* of that kind; how can it (with any good Reason) be conceived, that any Man should ever arrive at such an exercise of Conscience, as to oppose all the Men in the World, and his own inclinations besides, upon the *single account of Conscience*? And yet this often falls out to be the case: Conscience in a Man carries it against himself, and all others opposing it. Now if there be no real God, to make impresson upon his Conscience, nor to which (by a natural instinct) his Conscience can refer; and all Men agree to tell him things contrary to what he calls his Conscience; and all his own inclinations strongly oppose too; whence should such a Conscience and such a Principle come? The *Atheist* must of necessity make a faulty out of this World to somewhat that is really and truly above it, and beyond it, and that made it; or else the ground of such a circumstanced Conscience can never be found out.

Thirdly, Conscience in Men could never be so basely descended, nor come from so mean an *original*, as the *Atheist* pretends; and it have so noble and real Effects upon Mankind, and so much to their general and particular

particular Good and Advantage, as it really has. It layes an Arrest upon Men, and restrains them from open and secret Evil and Injustice: and provokes them to do (and gives them satisfaction in doing) whatever is Just and Righteous. Nothing is more certain and real than the Effects of Conscience, both in the trouble it gives Men, and also in the satisfaction it affords them. 'Tis impossible such general and real Effects should arise from a *very Lye*, a *meer Nothing*. He that will suppose that, debaseth Mankind so far, that there can be no certainty in the word of any thing Men have, or of any thing they are. For though some particular persons may be, by some accidental means, singly possess'd with foolish and vain conceits; yet 'tis ridiculous to conceive, that *Mankind* should *all* be possess'd with *one Fancy* without the least ground for it; and that *Fancy* should universally operate in the same way. He that aims to make all the World uncertain in what they generally agree in, I wonder where he intends to lay a foundation of any certainty amongst Mankind! Whatever wants a natural innate evidence to Reason, can never be supposed to be received by the universal Reason of the World: unless you will suppose Reason not to be Reason, and make

make it a meer *Nullity*. Men every where find the workings of Conscience so real, that they produce Troubles the whole World cannot remove; and such peace and satisfaction in Men, that neither the whole World, nor themselves by any other workings of their own Souls, could lead themselves into. Which must needs insure us, that there is an intercourse between God, and that we call Conscience; and that it hath a peculiar derivation from, and relation to Him, and is not begotten by a slavish subjected crudulity to vain imposed *Fantasms*, and *empty Nothings*.

Had there not been Truth in the Notion of God, (and so real a ground for Conscience) and had not the principle of Conscience been naturally inherent in Mankind, Men would never have been capable of being deceived in a false Object of Worship. The truth is, *Religion* (let it be never so heterodox and erroneous) confirms the Principle of Religion it self, and the tendency that is in Men toward God and the true Religion. For take *Mahumetanism*, or what false Religion you will, the ground of Mens subjection to it was an in-bred Devotion that is to God above them; their ignorance of whom, made them liable to pay that Devotion, where they were deluded and

and mistaken. I doubt not but that every person, that has performed any Worship since the World began, though never so false, had an implicate tendency (through that innate Principle that was in him) to the true God. We will suppose the most the Atheist can desire us to suppose for his advantage in this case; that Men under a false Worship may have the same exercise of Conscience, (in trouble, and satisfaction) that others have in that we call the True and Right Knowledge of God. Suppose a *Mahumetan* as much concerned in matter of Conscience as a Christian; and the Atheist thence inferring that Conscience universally may be a *Cheat* upon Men every-where, because it is so there in that particular case: Yet this will no way help him; for, in this case, the Principle of Conscience it self is no Cheat put upon them: the *Cheat* lies in the wrong Exercise and Application of Conscience, of which we are not speaking, but of Conscience it self. This supposeth Conscience in them. 'Tis not here, whether Conscience or no Conscience; a God, or no God: But whether a True God, or a false God; the being of a supreme Power is admitted: the deceit lies in the Application. 'Tis not all one to say,

say, [*Because I am deceived in the Exercise of Conscience, therefore I may be as well be deceived in the Principle of Conscience it self.*] And [*that 'tis as easie to make Conscience in men by deceit, as to mislead it when it is existing.*] Because, in the one case, when Men are deceived and deluded in their Understandings, and so in their Consciences, about the Object and manner of Worship, there is a visible ground for such a Deceit, and a rational account to be given of it: Because there is a real God existing, and a certain principle of Conscience in Men towards him, upon which (through their weakness and ignorance) a Cheat may operate. But in the other case, to beget such a Principle as Conscience it self, by a Cheat in men, and then apply it as we please, is most absurd to imagine: because here is no ground at all for such a Cheat to be built upon. For if there be no God, as the Atheist saies there is not, I am sure there is no real ground then for imposing the *Cheat of Conscience* upon the World. In the one case I perswade a man to worship a false God, where there is really a true God, and his Conscience tells him, he must worship some God: and in the other case, I perswade him to believe he must worship

ship some God, when he has no sense of any God, and that there is really no God. The truth is, all the *false Copies of a Deity* in the World declare plainly there is some *true Original*. Men would never have gone about to counterfeit Silver, if there had been no such Metal. Men have been still so prone to worship *something*, that they have layen the more open and liable to mistakes and Cheats in the *objects* and *manner* of Worship. The trouble and satisfaction men have in their Conscience when 'tis eroneous, highly confirms, and no way destroyes this principle of Conscience it self. The greater the Cheat is upon Men in the *manner* of Worship, the more evident is the principle of Worship within them. He that is deceived in the *object* of his Love, in loving trifles and baubles, and things not worth love, gives the stronger evidence of such a principle as Love being in him. All false Worship is granted upon that innate subjection Men are born withall to the true God. If there had been no true God, *Mahomet* would never have been worshipped; nor would there ever have been any Idols or false Gods. Though men fall into the thickest darkness about the *objects* and *manner* of Worship, yet

yet the Principle of Conscience and Worship still remains, and is thereby justified and asserted.

For the Atheist's second Objection, which is against the Universality of this Principle in men, that we call Conscience, [*That 'tis not general: and that many finde no such thing in themselves.*] The Answer is, 'Tis not necessary upon his own supposition granted, that every *Universal* should be made up of each *individual* particular: that I have proved before. Suppose a Man has debauched himself into so great a sottishness, that he has no use of Reason; suppose a Man has lived so long that *he dotes*, and is childish; will you say, therefore, Reason is not an Universal Principle? If the *Atheist* say, these things happen upon particular accidents; so say I, does the other, if any such thing ever fall out to be. Where will you find a Man (without a particular and extraordinary remark upon him) without some Conscience? But suppose a Man, by God's particular permission, have for a time extinguished the exercise of that Principle, and has taken much pains to *sear it up*: does that argue that there never was in him any such principle as Conscience? or does

does it not rather establish the truth of it? The *Atheist* will often tell you, that what men call *Conscience*, is nothing but *Melancholy* and morose thoughts of men, when they are in ill humours. But 'tis to be strongly presumed he finds some image of it in himself, that makes him able so to *nick-name* it in others. Let any, the highest *Atheist* tell me, whether ever he got, for any time, rid of his *Conscience*, without being at some trouble to oppose it? And let him dress it up as he will, and give it what name he will, and oppose it under what notion he will; yet 'tis evident, he landed in this World with such a Principle; and let me tell him, he can never murder it so sure, but that, for ought he knows, it may revive upon him again. Let any Man intoxicate himself, and be never so drunk, yet his Reason will probably have a Resurrection. He cannot be sure to immerge that Principle unless he drown his own Being. When he awakes, he will find he is a Man, though he did what he could to make himself a Beast. Those Monsters of men amongst the *Roman Emperours*, who triumphed most in pretending *Atheism*, (threatned the Wind if it blew upon them, and the Clouds if they rained upon them)

betrayed

betrayed, upon every small occasion, the dreadfulest fears imaginable. *Julian* the Apostate, at last, cryed out, *The Galilean had overcome him*. The great *Hector* of the Gods, *Epicurus* himself, was the most eminent coward that ever lived, in those things he most defied: nothing ever frightened any Man more than those two things did him, *Death* and the *Gods*: so you shall find it reported in *Cicero*. His *Atoms* had not solved his *Conscience*, nor cured him, it seems, of his fears; he was certain of them, though he bottom'd all the World upon *Chance*. How many are to be seen daily, that when they think they have safely interred their *Conscience*, when they come to any extremity, soon find a revival of it again?

There is nothing so universally certain amongst Mankind, but what is subject to variation in *Individuals*: which strongly proves, that the World has not Immutability nor Eternity affixed to it. Sometimes we see such Members of the Body, and such Faculties of the Soul cease to exert themselves in particulars: but yet such Monsters (for they are no better) ought not to destroy the general Character and Definition we give of Natural Beings. In this matter of *Conscience* (which does

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plainly

plainly admit the Being of a God, to which it hath immediate relation,) two things strongly plead for the generality of it in all Men, above the generality of any one thing that belongs to them. *First*, That 'tis the great *Trustee* for God in the World. And (unless it be in some very extraordinary case, where God concurs with a Man to extinguish it, as a special and signal Judgment upon him) it seems Plain, that no Man can totally obliterate it in himself. *Secondly*, 'Tis the great *medium* he will judge the World by. He will deal with Men according to their light; and the Consciences of Men shall perform that great office of *accusing* or *excusing*, in the great day. He that either actually has a Principle of Conscience, or ever had such a thing, or comes hereafter to find that such a Principle is within him, gives a witness sufficient to the *Being* of such a Principle; and I believe the Atheist will undertake a hard task, to find *one individual Man*, well in his Wits, that is not included in that compass. He that tells me, he hath no Conscience, and expects I should believe him; may as well expect that I should take his word, if he should tell me, he is not of the same composition with other Men: and does not see nor hear,

though

though he has eyes and ears visibly, as other Men have.

A fourth Argument to prove the truth of a supreme Being above the World, is, *The Miracles that have been wrought in the World*. This stabs the Atheist and mortally wounds him. If ever in fact, there were such a thing as a *Miracle*, the Atheist is irrecoverably gone. All his *Hypotheses* fall to the ground; all the fig-leaves he can get will never hide him from apparent nakedness and folly. To give this Argument its due force, I shall endeavour two things. *First*, To prove that a *Miracle leads us directly to God*; and is, in its being, destructive to all an Atheist says. And *Secondly*, That the *fact of such Miracles* is true: and that we have good Reason to believe it is so; and that there have been often such in the World.

A Miracle is properly, *that which could not come to pass by any natural Cause*. If a Man *actually dead* should be raised again, it were a thing could not be brought to pass in any natural way; nor could any natural account be given of it. If a Man *born blind*, and that had no eyes, should by a word speaking, be made to see,

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'twere a thing out of all humane reach to do. You must step out of the World, and take a view of something above it, to know how such a thing could come to pass. The working of a Miracle is the doing of that, which (apparently to our Senses and our Reason) nothing visible in the World could do. And if so, it must needs be done by somewhat that is superior to the World. Nay, 'tis sometimes the doing of that, which is quite contrary to the natural motion and constant tendency of the whole Universe. If a Man be *once dead*, and that principle of Life and Motion that was in him be gone, 'tis natural for his Body to corrupt, and vary the form of its matter: Now to make such a Man live again (who by the standing Law of Nature died, and must by the same Law corrupt) is not only a thing above all natural Power, but a thing *directly contrary* to Nature, and perfectly inverts the whole course of it. For 'tis as much the reason and course of Nature for a man to die, as 'tis at the first for him to live. If therefore any such thing were ever done in the World, it must necessarily be brought to pass by a *Power above all natural Causes*, and the utmost ability of all natural Be-

ings.

ings. We must needs erect a Throne for a Power superior to Nature, and such a Power as must directly lead us to God. 'Tis as much a Miracle, and as far above all natural Power, to revive a Man actually dead, as to make a Man out of a stone, or form him from a lump of earth. Consider the World, in which of the *Atheists* notions of it you will, if there be nothing *above* it, nor *besides* it, then 'tis plainly impossible that any thing should happen or come to pass but what has its rise and foundation from somewhat *within* it. For if there be nothing existing but this World, there can be nothing produced but what this World can produce. But, that we call a *Miracle* is such a thing, as is quite beyond the Worlds production: neither the Reasonable part, nor the Sensible part, nor the whole together, can produce a Miracle. Not the *Reasonable part*: for the great and genuine business of Reason, is, to place things in their due dependencies each upon other; and to know Causes producing Effects, and means suited to Ends. Reason can never elevate any thing, in its operation, beyond itself, nor force an act from it beyond the compass of its own Being. That Reason has an innate antipathy to: 'twere to see

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Reason

Reason against it self, and say, Reason shall produce things without Reason, and against Reason. Reason cannot be imagined to deal in that, for which no Reason can be given. And therefore, when we see a *Miracle*, (a thing that can have no natural cause) our Reason directs us to look to somewhat above the World, that must needs be the Cause of it. *Not the Sensible part* of the World: for that can never alter its course. Nature is a perfect Law to it self, which it can never repeal. This we are assured of, not only by our experience of the constant course that is kept by all Natural Beings: but because they keep such a course, as carries an intrinsick Reason for it in their very nature and Being; and such a course as they must keep, and can keep no other. If you dig up a Tree, and cut off the Root, 'twill certainly die. This we are assured of, not only from the fact of it, that we continually find it so, but our Reason necessarily tells us, it must be so, and can be no otherwise. And therefore whatever is done above all Natural Power, and contrary to all Natural Operation, must needs silence our Sense and our Reason, and all parts of the World; and forceth us to recur to somewhat above the World, that

that must be Lord over it, and the great Disposer of it. Two things seem to make it plain, that the whole World, and all the ability that Nature has, can never produce a *Miracle*. *First*, Nature can never go beyond it self, nor do any thing by a power above it self. The bounds of every thing is its own being. 'Tis an absurdity to say, a thing should *out-do it self*: or that the Effect should be greater than the Cause. If any thing be done which is beyond all the power of Nature, that could never be caused by Nature. To cure a Man that is sick of a Disease; or to raise a Man that is a natural Cripple to a perfect soundness, by speaking a word to him, is beyond all the Confines of Natural Power, and therefore cannot be an Effect arising from any Natural Cause: there being no such thing, potentially, in nature it self, nor any relative Operation natural in such a way. *Secondly*, Nature cannot contradict it self: because, its productions are suitable to, and inherent in its own being. Nature is as a free agent, so a necessary agent. The fire cannot be cold, nor the Water hot; Throw Men into the fire, and if they be not burnt, they must be beholding to somewhat above Nature; for Nature will destroy them. If a Man should walk in the Air

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and not fall, and walk upon the Waters and not sink, it must be by a help supernatural. For Nature should, otherwise, oppose it self; which it cannot do. And to say, its Effects should cease, is all one, as to say Nature it self, in its own being, should cease, and so the World should cease. Whatsoever can go beyond the Power of Nature, and contradict the power of Nature, must needs be above the power of Nature; and what is so, must needs be above, the power of the World. And this doth two ways evidently overthrow the vain supposition of the Worlds Eternity. For, *First*, If there be any Power above it, it cannot be Eternal: Unless you will make two Eternals, one above another; which is absurd, and perfectly impossible. And *Secondly*, if ever the course of Nature and this World were stopped and crossed, then I am sure the World, in the course of it, cannot have been Eternal neither.

Two things are usually objected against *Miracles*. First, the *matter of Fact is denied*. And Secondly, *The Atheist will tell you, that those things we call Miracles, were not really and truly so: but were extraordinary and unusual things, brought about by some secret Natural Cause, though not known*

known nor perceived. For the first of these Objections, I will handle it distinctly by it self.

To the second, I answer. Every thing in the World was at the first, a *Miracle*: nor could any Reason be given of it. Which is a plain proof that God made the World; and that it did not make it self. There was no other Cause of all Originals in Nature, and of the first things, that were in the World, but that God pleased to make them. No doubt, at the first, a Man might have called the Sun, or a Rainbow, a great Miracle. Nor could they ever find out any natural Cause of them, nor of the first Being of any thing. The whole World was a stupendious Miracle, and without any Reason to be given for it, but what lay in the Makers Breast. To me therefore that saying of *Aristotle* seems wise and excellent [*That it is absurd for any Man to go about to define first Principles; because they cannot be defined.*] But since the World is extant, and our constant beholding of it, and converse with it, makes it no more a Miracle to us, than we are to our selves: and since we find that certainty and fixation in the Worlds first make, that there is no more since made, but a continuance of the World in a natural orderly course,

course and succession; and that these first Originals do, by a certain necessary Law of their own being and existence, propagate the World, in a way not only obvious to our Senses, but demonstratively to our Reason; and that such Beings cannot cease to operate as they do, nor cannot operate otherwise than they do; we come rightly to call that a *Miracle*, which is neither one of the Worlds original pieces, or first Principles, nor any thing that can naturally be deduced from any or all of them, in the regular way of the Worlds existing. In answering therefore this Objection, I will first admit all that can be admitted to the *Atheist's* advantage; which is, That whensoever we see any thing come to pass, that we are not able to give an account how, in a natural and in the ordinary course of the World, it should come to pass: and though we have not seen it come to pass before; yet, in that case, if there be a *possibility* of a remote and occult cause, that we do not at the present see nor comprehend, there is no absolute necessity to impose that as a *Miracle* upon any Man; because he will say, 'tis more reasonable to believe it to come from somewhat he doth see, (if there be a possibility of it,) than to come from what he doth not see. But, when

when the case falls out to be, that a thing is brought to pass, to which we are not only unable to assign a natural Cause, but such a thing as is not possible to have a natural Cause; which is necessarily to be concluded, when it either overthrows the course of Nature, and goes directly counter to it, or is evidently above it, and superiour to it) in such a case Mankind must submit to it as a *Miracle*, and go to somewhat superiour to Nature, to find the Cause of it. There can never be a natural cause assigned for *raising a Dead Man to Life*; 'tis both above Nature, and against Nature. For any Man to be able, in one moment, to speak all Languages, is a thing above Nature, and naturally impossible: for we see and know, that Men must arrive at the knowledge of any Language, by industry and use, and cannot attain it otherwise. In such cases, as we see no visible natural cause for such things, so 'tis utterly impossible there should be any. If a Man should vanish out of our sight, and in two or three minutes convey himself a hundred miles off; as we could give no Reason for it, so our Reason assures us it were impossible any natural Reason ever should be given for it. There is no room for any possibility of an *occult cause*; 'tis, we know, out of all natural

natural compass, and such a thing as all the power of the World can never perform; and must of necessity be brought to pass by a Power superior to it.

For the other Objection the Atheist may make, which is, *To deny that ever there were any such Miracles wrought in the World*: and that the matter of Fact about them is not true. First, I must tell the Atheist, if he will believe nothing but what he sees, nor give credit to any thing that is reported, by former Ages, and delivered down to us, he must confine himself to a very narrow part of the World, and indeed, fall below that due station a rational Creature ought to keep. VVhen-ever my Reason can assure me of a thing, by arriving at a satisfaction about it, such as Reason requires, I ought to be ascertained of it; because *Doubling*, in its *Foundation*, is imperfection, and in its *Operation*, Vexation. The tendency of the rational Soul is against both these. Reason requires no more, in any thing, to satisfy it self withall, than the matter, 'tis conversant with, is capable of affording. 'Twere to deny Reason to be Reason, to say, it required a knowledge of any thing, beyond the nature and extent of it; and should not

acquiesce

acquiesce in the utmost evidence the subject can afford. And therefore, in this present case of *Miracles*, which are things done and past in other ages, a Man, by his Reason considers; First, 'Tis Possible such things *may* have been done; I cannot positively, upon any good ground, determine they have *not been done*: because 'tis possible (and must be so granted) that there *may* be a supreme Power above and beyond the World, that *may* over-rule the World, as it pleases; and that because there is nothing visible, either in Sense or Reason, that makes it *impossible*. Secondly, A Man must consider, By what ways and means he may reasonably be assured and satisfied, that such things actually were don. To wish to see a thing that is past, were childish; to call for any *Mathematical Demonstration* of it, were ridiculous; and both impossible. And therefore a Man must come to know the fact of things, transacted before he was born, and of such as he never saw, by the credible Testimony of others; assisted, in some cases, with the present visible remaining Effects of the things themselves; and 'tis not possible to know them any other way. The Question therefore, in this case, will be, [*Whether* (upon the Credit of others, by a general Testimony given

given to it) we may reasonably believe a thing to have been, which we never saw? and be satisfied of the Truth of that, which we our selves were not eye-witnesses of?]

For the making of this good, in the affirmative, let these things be considered.

First, Those that were eye-witnesses, at the first, of any matter of fact had as much certain assurance of it, as we have of any thing we now see. And therefore their report of it then cannot be false, unless they designed it should be so. For, whatever mistakes they were capable of then, we are still liable to the same now; and whatsoever, upon that account, will invalidate their Testimony, will destroy the grounds of our own Belief for ever. 'Tis no-where necessary here to determine, where the ultimate and supreme Certainty of Mankind lyes, and whence it arises. To attribute so much to the Senses, as *Epicurus* does, is, doubtless, too much to debase that noble part of Man, which is his Reason, and to make way for all imaginable deceit. 'Tis obvious to us how commonly our Senses are mistaken. Should a Man take no other impression of the Sun or the Moon into his understanding, but what he receives from his Senses, he would never know either of them to be
above

above half a yard diameter: if he did not consider, that the distance of the object deceives his sight. Experience tells us how easie it is (were it not for the help of our Understanding,) to represent false Images, that shall perfectly cheat the Senses. For when by a false Light, or any other deceivable way to the Senses, a thing is represented to me to be otherwise, than indeed it is; the understanding looks beyond the bare Representation, to the Circumstances wherein the Deceit lyes, and so rectifies the Senses. The Understanding often does so, and is the supreme guide of them. Nor does it ever depart from the information of Sense, where 'tis satisfied there is no *accidental Deceit* put upon the Senses. In such cases, the informations of Sense, and the results of right Reason, are ever the same, because both perfect in their kind. 'Twere a great demonstration of Imbecillity in the Understanding, to deny what we feel and see to be, and are sure there is no deceit put upon us in so doing. In this case *Aristotle* sayes rightly, *Relinquere Sensum, & sequi Rationem, debilitas est Intellectus*. And the Philosopher was doubtless upon the right way of probation, that when one disputed with him against Motion, rose up himself,

himself, and walkt about before him. It seems therefore most reasonable to believe, that the utmost of all humane Certainty lies in the final results of the Understanding: which takes in all the assistance of Sense, in such things as are objects for both; and never differs from Sense, when 'tis no way deceived or abused; of which the Understanding is still the Judge. And in other things speculative, and beyond the compass of Sense, it judges purely and singly by it self. The faculty of our Senses, and that of the Understanding are both perfect in their kind. But the Understanding is superiour, and rectifies that deceit and mistake the Senses are liable to: and, when 'tis satisfied, the Senses are in their true and right exercise, and under no deceit, never differs from them; but the Senses and the Understanding alwaies concur: 'Twere to imagine, else, that God had made us divided against our selves.

But so far as our present matter in hand is concerned, let us take things which way we will; those that were, at the first, eye-witnesses of any thing, and had their Understandings about them, were capable of making a Judgment as certain, as Mankind is capable of. And, when very many together agree to witness to the fact of a thing

thing they saw, it must needs give all the cumulative advantage to the Certainty of it that possibly we can expect. The Deceit therefore that we can only fear, in the Testimony of others, is, an *intention and design* they may possibly have to deceive and abuse us, and to misrepresent matter of Fact to us. Now that which ought to satisfy our minds in this case, (because we have as much to our purpose as the subject matter is capable of, and as our satisfaction ought to require) is this: If we find, in any Age, men of all Interests and Principles in that Age, though never so different in themselves, all concurring in a matter of Fact; and many who were, in that very Age, led by their Interests and Principles, to oppose the truth of it, as carrying in it consequences destructive to them; yet still acknowledging that matter of Fact, and justifying themselves against the Effects and Products of it, by some collateral way, and never by denying the Fact: (which could arise from no other reason, but because the Fact was a thing so palpable, that the whole Age would have confuted and shamed them, in the denial of it) and that the truth of such a matter of Fact hath descended to us with the concurrent Testimony of all Ages since:

since: 'tis not any way reasonable to doubt of such a thing. *First*, Here is all the Evidence possible to be had about a thing past. And *Secondly*, Such as ought to make us certain of it; because we must needs judge of other Men that lived then, by our selves and others that live now, and by the constitution and frame of the World; and taking that, which is an infallible *Medium*, in this case, to judge by, 'tis morally impossible such a thing should be a Lye.

And this will appear to be the very case about *Miracles*, and the fact of them. For we have not only such a Testimony about them, as we have that there was such a place as *Rome*, or such a man as *Alexander* or *Cæsar*: (because perhaps no Mans interest ever lay to deny such a thing; but as it would have been generally ridiculous, and presently confuted, so haply it would not have been to any purpose to any one Man, in his own particular, to have attempted such a Negative.) But, in this case, 'twas the interest of many, (where-ever *Miracles* were wrought to establish a new Religion,) to deny the fact of them; and nothing could have been more easie, nor more sure of success, if there had been really no such thing.

And

And yet we find the *Miracles* wrought by *Christ* [not to mention any of the other *Miracles* that have been in the World] descend to us with the universal Testimony of that Age: not only of those that were converted by them, and friends to them; but by the greatest opposers of the Religion introduced by them, both of Jews and Heathens. *Josephus*, a famous and learned Jew, in the 18th Book of his History, and chap. 14. tells the World this concerning *Christ*; sayes he, *At that time was Jesus, a wise Man, if it be lawful to call him a Man: for he was the performer of divers wonderful Works, and the instructor of those who willingly entertain the Truth: and he drew unto him divers Jews and Greeks to be his followers. This was Christ, who being accused by the Princes of our Nation before Pilate, and afterward condemned to the Cross by him; yet did not those who followed him from the beginning, forbear to love him for the Ignominy of his Death: for he appeared unto them alive the third day after, according as the Divine Prophets had before testified the same, and divers other wonderful things of him; and from that time forward the race of the Christians, who have derived their name from him, hath never ceased.*

Not only *Josephus*, but the Jews generally were forced to acknowledge the Fact of Christ's Miracles; but they tell you he did them not by his own Power, but by some Magick Art which he brought out of *Egypt*, or by the vertue of their *Gabbala*.

Tertullian in his Apology, ch. 21. speaking of those miraculous passages that happened at the Death of Christ; sayes he to the Heathen Romans; *These things cannot be suspected, seeing your own Calendars have remarked them, and your selves retain the testimony thereof in your own Registers*: And a little after, (speaking of the Miracles of Christ,) sayes he, *Pilate wrote all this History to the Emperour Tiberius; whereupon the Cæsars themselves had worshipped our Master, if their Government in so doing, had been consistent with the Men of this World, and Christians permitted to have been saluted Cæsars*. There is nothing more plain in History, than that under the Roman state, the several Lieutenants of their Provinces did send constant Registers of their Acts and of all the most material Passages that happened, to the Emperours; and so *Pontius Pilate* sent a Register of his, to the Emperour *Tiberius*, wherein he gave an account of Christ, and his Miracles: this is also clear and evident from *Justin Martyr's* second Apology

logy for the Christians to the Emperour *Antoninus*, wherein, endeavouring him to perswade him to believe the Miracles of Christ, he shews him how they were of old foretold by the Prophets; and to convince him they actually were, he refers him to the Acts of *Pontius Pilate*, then registred at *Rome*. And *Tertullian* again in the first Chapter of his Apology, tells us plainly, that the account that came out of *Palestine* of Christ's Miracles, was so powerful at *Rome*, and made such impressions there, that the Emperour moved the Senate earnestly to embrace that Religion, who gave no other reason for their refusal of it, but that they had not themselves, before it was proposed to them, approved of it: and for a while the Emperour persisted in his Opinion, threatening punishment to the accusers of Christians.

Gelsus the great stickler against the Christian Religion, confesseth the fact of Christ's Miracles, as may be seen in *Origen's* seventh Book against him; only he does as the *Jews* did, fater them upon the power of the Devil: to which *Origen* largely replies, *If the Devil do at any time counterfeit Miracles*, saith he, from the impostures and counterfeits, we may infer, that there

are true Miracles wrought by a divine Power. But in this case, if ever there were a Miracle wrought [let it be fathered upon what Men please] they cannot deny but that there is a Power supreme to the World, and that must produce such a Miracle; and there needs no better acknowledgment than that, to lead Men directly to God.

But suppose we had no other account of these Miracles, but from the Christians themselves that then lived; and such whose interest it was to defend them; who can imagine that Men should tell a notorious lye in the face of that very Age, when it was in the power of every Man to contradict it? and that it should universally pass without controul? is it a thing credible, that the Christians then, should chiefly insist and justify themselves upon a matter of Fact that was false, and that every-body might then know to be so? it had been a readier way to have brought ruine and destruction upon them, than have proved a means to gain them favour and protection. If we consult the several Apologies [the first of which was *Justin Martyr's*] the Christians then made for themselves, upon several occasions to the Emperours, and to the Senat; we shall find one

one of the chiefest foundations they bottomed the Christian Religion upon, and their own justification in the profession of it, was the Miracles that were openly and visibly wrought for the first settlement, and after-confirmation of it in the World: And the effect of such Apologies, as *Eusebius* and other Ecclesiastical Writers plentifully inform us, was, that the Christians very often obtained favour, and thereby procured rest and ease to themselves, from their fore and grievous Persecutions. Now 'tis not to be imagined, but that if the Fact of such Miracles had been false, and the Christians had made such a lye their refuge, their Enemies would have been thereby rather enraged than appeased; and it would certainly have hastened their ruine, rather than have procured their Liberty.

But methinks that which ought abundantly to satisfy any reasonable Man of this Truth, that there were Miracles wrought in those Primitive Times of the Gospel, is, That we not only find the Christian Writers in that Age *unâ voce*, proving the Miracles of Christ to the Heathens, by Testimonies from amongst themselves, and their own acknowledged

Records, and the consent of the whole Age, both Friends and Foes, wherein they were wrought to the truth of them, as hath been shewed; but also we find them loudly crying out to the Heathens, that if any doubted of the Miracles wrought by Christ and the Apostles, if they would come amongst the Christians, they would then shew them actually and visibly, Miracles wrought before their own Eyes, by the Power of Christ every day: that is worth consideration, with what wonderful and general triumph they defend their Religion, and oppose the Heathens with this Challenge; and with an offer to convince them by their own eye-sight of the Miracles that were frequently wrought amongst them.

Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with *Tryphon* the Jew, speaks very largely and fully about this matter, and tells him, *We that believe in Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, adjure all Devils and unclean Spirits, and have them obedient to us. You may know that Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, by that which is done in your sight by his Power; for the Devils tremble at his Name: and being adjured thereby, are overcome: with much more to the same purpose; professing the Miracles that*

that were every day wrought in the sight and view of all Men. *Irenaeus* in his Book *adversus Hæreses, lib. 2. chap. 36.* speaking of Miracles then wrought by the Name and Power of Christ, hath these words; *Wherefore in his Name, they who are truly his Disciples, receiving Grace from him, are enabled to benefit the rest of Men: for some cast out Devils most really and truly, so that they who are cleansed from those unclean Spirits, do often believe themselves, and are in the Church: some have the knowledge of things to come, Visions and prophetic Readings; and others by the imposition of Hands cure those that are sick of any infirmity, and restore them perfectly whole. And even now, as we have said, both the Dead have risen, and many years have remained with us.*

Origen in his Book against *Gelsus*, cries out of him, *If thou wilt not believe other Miracles yet believe what thou seest now, for 'tis the magnificent work of Jesus, to heal even to this day in the name of Jesus whom God pleaseth.*

Tertullian is so plain and positive in this matter, that in his famous Apology for the Christians before-mentioned, he tells the Roman Senators, that if they pleased to try the truth of that Miraculous Power that was then in the Church, they would see it

it openly exercised when they pleased before their own Tribunals, in the 23 chap. of his Apology.

'Tis wholly incredible to believe the World should be universally deceived in these things; and that no-body [no not such who were highly concerned to do it, and engaged by a contrary Religion, to overthrow a Religion chiefly established and upheld by such Miracles] should contradict the Fact of them, and discover the Cheat, if they were merely fictitious. There seems to be a kind of Infallibility in this circumstanced Testimony about a bare matter of Fact. For, whether such a thing were done or no, or whether there was such a Man, or such a Place or no, is not capable of any defilement by conveyance. 'Tis not like a *Story*, which is capable of all kind of Alterations, Additions and Diminutions: but 'tis such a thing, as must be either an intire positive Truth, or an intire Falshood. If any Man in this Age should pretend to work a *Miracle*, it would be the business of almost every Man to discover the Truth of it: and if he were found an Impostor, and that truly and really there was no such thing, how many would strive to proclaim the Cheat first: and the Testimony of the whole

whole Age would be his Executioner. Nor have we only this moral Certainty of the fact of these Miracles; but the concurrence of that *important occasion*, upon the account of which they were wrought; and very good reason to think they should be wrought upon by it; which was, the settling of the *Christian Religion* in the World: To put an end not only to *Gentilism*, and all *Heathenish* Worship; but to determine that Ecclesiastical Policy of the *Jews*, which had been, by the like extraordinary Miracles, before settled in the World. And that such a thing as the Christian Religion was then introduced, we have not only the same general concurring Testimony; but also we our selves, at this time, see the Effects, Products, and Continuance of it, daily before our Eyes; which is the utmost Evidence we can possibly have of any thing transacted and passed heretofore.

Secondly, He that upon no terms will admit us to be *morally certain* of any matter of Fact, by the Testimony of the Age when it was done, (for if ever he will admit it, he must in this Case, where all things concur;) he must (with great absurdity, and without the least colour of Reason, or certain knowledge of his own,

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to contradict it,) put the *Fool* and the *Lye* upon all Men of all sorts in an Age: and of necessity, render them so *foolishly weak*, as not to be able to judge whether a thing be done or not done; or else so *maliciously false* to all Mankind, as to agree together to convey a *Lye* down to them, and impose an eminent Cheat upon them. This, as it is in the reason of the thing, absurd to think, (when there is no visible Reason why they should do so, and many apparent Reasons why they should not do so) so our experience tells us, That there was never yet any such thing done in the World. There never was an offer made to Cheat the World with a matter of Fact, but, in that very Age, 'twas discovered and made appear: and (together with the story of the Cheat) that discovery of it likewise so to be, hath been conveyed to all future times. There have been but three Religions in the World, that ever pretended to a Systeme of supernatural Revelation: which are, the *Jewish Religion*, the *Christian Religion*, and the *Mahumetan Religion*. The matters of fact of both the former, have had all the concurrence of humane Testimony: and no man can shew, that in the Ages, wherein they were transacted, they were ever denied.

denied by any. The last, which is the *Mahumetan Religion*, was openly discovered in that Age, to be a *Cheat*: and the World is as well assured of *Mahomets* being an Impostor, as they are of the Religion he framed; and that by the testimony of the Age wherein he lived. Does not the story of that Age tell us, how he began his Religion? What advantage he took by the disease he had of the *Falling-sickness*, to tell men whenever he was in a *Fit*, that he was in a *Rapture*, and conversed with the *Angel Gabriel*? How one *Sergius* of *Alexandria* (an Apostate and discontented Monk) coming to him, persuaded him to form the *Alchoran*, by adding such matters, out of the Old and New Testaments, to his own devices, as might bring in *Gentiles*, *Jews* and *Christians* to his Religion? The story of that Age assures us fully of the whole *Cheat* of his Life; and of his Promise at his Death, (in some imitation, no doubt, of Christ) to rise again within *four Daies*. In which time he became putrified and noisome; and his Disciples, at last, forced to bury him. The wisest and best men, at that very time, opposed him and made his Drunkenness, and horrible Debauchery notorious and evident. Whoever con-

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sults the Principles of his Religion; will plainly enough perceive, the design was to set up himself, and engage all Parties to him. The *Alchoran* is, by some, rightly abridged into these eight Principles. 1. Every one ought to believe that God is a great God, and Mahomet is his Prophet, Abraham the friend of God, Moses the Messenger of God, and Christ the Breath of God; of whom the Virgin Mary grew with Child by smelling a Rose, and was deliver'd of him at her breasts. 2. Every Man ought to marry to encrease the Sectaries of Mahomet. 3. Every Man must give of his wealth to the poor. 4. Every Man must make his prayers five times a day. 5. Every Man must keep a Lent one month in a year. 6. Must be obedient to his Parents. 7. Thou shalt not Kill. And 8. Do unto others as thou wouldest be done unto thy self. 'Tis not hard to perceive, whence this counterfeit-Coin was fetcht; and where the legitimate and original stamp is to be found. He would induce the good of all Religions, so he might be the chief Prophet. The whole business then of Mahomet was a grand notorious Cheat. And though it has possessed so much of the World since, yet we have abundant assurance from the Testimony of the same Age wherein he lived, that it was so, and the particulars of it exactly handed down to us.

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We are able to trace all false Religions and pretended Deities to their Original. The World is filled with a sufficient Account of the Deceit and Fabulousness of them all. To give one clear Instance of it: Saturn was the most ancient God the Heathens had amongst them; Tertullian says this of him: *You have* (says he, speaking to the Romans) *no God more ancient than Saturn: yet Diodorus Siculus, Tullus, Crassus, Severus, Cornelius Nepos, nor any other Historian, ever spake of him otherwise than a Man. If we seek for proofs drawn out of publick Records and Monuments, we cannot meet with faithfuller or more certain, than here in Italy it self: where we learn that Saturn, after many Voyages, landed in this Province, while he was coming from Greece; and was received by one Janus. The Mountain where he dwelt, was called Saturnien: The City he founded carries even until now the same appellation. It was he who first found out the invention of Tables, and signing or making money with the image of Princes: from whence it comes, that the publick treasure is placed by you in his Temple. Now if Saturn were a Man, he was the Son of another Man: and being his Father was a Man, you cannot say, He was the Son of Heaven and Earth. But Saturn, in person, surprizing the Inhabitants*

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of several places, where he landed; and they not knowing whence he came, passed after for a divine Person, and a God. Tertul. Apol. chap. 8. In the same manner, in his ninth Chapter, he shews them the original of Jupiter, Bacchus, Ceres, Minerva, and the rest of their Gods: and how they came first to be so accounted: and tells them, [*if Bacchus were therefore made a God with them, because he first taught them to plant Vines, they used Lucullus ill, in not making him a God too, who first planted Cherry-trees in Italy, and brought them from the Kingdom of Pontus.*] So clear and full account have we of all those things; and so little reason has any man to be deceived with those things; nor can he be deceived with them, unless he have a mind so to be.

'Tis to be supposed, that in matters disputable, 'tis much more easie to deceive Men that are weak and ignorant, by imposing upon them, than in any bare matter of Fact; wherein every Man, even the meanest, may confute a falshood; there the World can never come to be imposed upon. If all the cunningest Men in this Age should contrive to let Posterity know, that *London was never burnt, but stands just as it did twenty years ago*; 'Twere not in their power to make Posterity swallow down such a falshood;

hood, by perswading this Age universally, without any contradiction, to convey it as a Truth down to them.

Thirdly, To deny all kind of Certainty from moral Testimony, is, to deny our selves the benefit of any part of the World, or of any thing done in any part of the World, at any time in the World; but just what we our selves saw in the times and places wherein we lived. No one Age can be of any use to another, in any Record of it; nor any one Man of use to another, by his Credit, in such a way. For the same reason, that will make a Man not to believe others, will be as good to them, not to believe him: and so all Mankind must *live upon their eye-sight*; and he that wants that, must necessarily be a perfect Sceptick. This does not only destroy all confidence in present Society, (because, if I cannot rest assured of what all men generally, in an Age past, have affirm'd, and no Man has contradicted in that Age, nor since; I can much less be assured of what any number of Men shall tell me now, when I do not know, but that it may be contradicted by some that know otherwise, before this Age pass over.) But it does also interrupt the satisfaction that all Men have about themselves and their own Relations. For, what have we but a moral Assurance

from a concurring Testimony, with the visible effects of it, that such a Man is my Father; or such a Woman my Mother; or such persons my Relations; or that such a Country is my native Country: All Men generally rest satisfied, and credit humane Testimony with concurring effects, as they have good Reason about such things; and yet there may possibly be deceits here; and a good account given, both how, and why they may be so. But because they are so rare and unusual, and also *so improbable*, they do not at all disturb the general satisfaction Mankind has about those things. But when a whole Age agrees to assure us, by their Testimony of a matter of Fact they saw, and were Eye-witnesses of; there can be no Reason assigned of a deceit or mistake in them, further than what all Men are liable to, in the truest exercises of their Senses, and their Reason, in their then judging of it, nor in their conveying of it to us; because 'tis not to be conceived, but that if any falshood, in any Age, had been made publick, many (at least those whose interest it was to do it,) would have openly discovered and contradicted it. And to think a whole Age (Men of all sorts and parties, some against their own Interest, and others to no purpose at all) should agree to

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abuse posterity with an absolute untruth, is a thing beyond the compass of all humane credit.

Fourthly, He that will deny that a Man (by the exercise of his Reason, in comparing things together, and judging of moral circumstances,) can arrive at such an assurance as may and ought to satisfy a rational Man, about things which he never saw; he must deny one of the noblest, and most useful effects of the rational Soul; which is, *by rational inquiries and conclusions, to ascertain it self of things, that can no way be the Object of Sense*. No Man ever came to know, the World is round by sensible Experience: nor to foretel an Eclipse of the Sun, before it came to pass. Such things are singly the deductions of Reason, without any assistance of Sense. If no certain conclusion can be made from any humane Testimony however circumstanced, no Government nor Laws can be fixed beyond an Age. For if Men give no credit to any thing but what they see, every Age must either undo or do over again; whatever the precedent Age did. Nor can Men ever come to oblige their Successors; because the validity of that Obligation must needs

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depend upon the credit of a humane Conveyance. The *Atheist* therefore is most absurd in his Negative about this matter: the truth of which ought to be established, not only upon the present point, to prove That there is a God, by the truth of the Miracles which none but God could work; but also for the great Advantage we have by it, in assuring us of the fact of supernatural Revelations. Which, besides all the Divine Evidence they have peculiar to themselves, have also such a *credible Testimony* accompanying them, as, upon that account, makes them descend beyond the present Age wherein they were first delivered; and with apparent reason to reach us now, as well as those who were the eye-witnesses of them at first.

A fifth Argument to prove, against an Atheist, that God made the World, is this; *That the present frame and posture of the World is such, that the notion of a Deity, and a Power above the World is of absolute necessity to the upholding of it.* The Atheist, in denying the Being of God, denies the well-being; yea, destroys the being of the World it self. Though he can consist without the World, yet the World cannot subsist without him. Were there no power above the
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World, to influence it, (the sense of which did restrain and oblige men) we should soon experiment what the World would come to. For the making this Truth more evident, let us but imagine a *whole Country of Atheists*, that believed nothing above nor beyond this World: and believed themselves (as they must needs) to be the top of the World, that owed no subjection to any thing; and then take a view of those Consequences which must necessarily attend such an *Atheistical Crowd*, and by that we shall clearly discern, of what absolute necessity the acknowledgment of God is to the support of the World.

First, There could never come to be such a thing as a sense of good and evil amongst them. That's inconsistent with Atheism. The distinction of Good and Evil, is a Principle within us relating to something above us. The notion of that once taken away, the distinction of Good and Evil must needs expire: and the Supreme ruling Principle of every Man can be no other but the *pleasing himself*, and doing whatsoever his own inclination dictates to him. Suppose Men naturally lawless, and without any restraint within them, and you can never imagine them to come under any Law, but their own unruly appetite: and so, the whole of such a

company must be enslaved to the Will one of another, and to each individual Mans Will, so far as he has power to accomplish it. 'Tis the distinction between Good and Evil, that keeps the World from being a heap of rubbish and confusion. And no such distinction can ever be supposed to have its rise from a Man himself, unless he had a superiour, and were made with such a distinguishing Principle. And that for these Reasons.

First, Good and Evil can never be inherent in Men, if there be no God, because it has nothing it can refer to. A distinction of Good and Evil in a Man does necessarily relate to a perfect and supreme Good, as a Rule by which 'tis to be tryed. We cannot conceive how the notion of Good and Evil should ever have existed in the minds of Men, if there had not been an Eternal and Supreme Rectitude. Had there not been a Being Infinitely and Originally Good, the denomination of Good could never have been in the World: nor could we any other way, ever have known what had been meant by that we call Evil. There must needs have been a Supreme standard of these things: and in this matter of Good and Evil 'tis an infinite *Rectum*, that is *index sui & obliqui*.

Secondly,

Secondly, Because the distinction of Good and Evil in Men is a thing perfectly relating to Reward and Punishment; which none can be the ultimate dispenser of to himself: because no Man can be imagined to do any thing against himself, when he is a Law to himself; nor to condemn any thing in himself as Evil, when he is Supreme. Nor, on the other hand, is it proper to say, *a man can reward himself*; because he can add nothing to himself. All Reward is an expectation beyond our selves. When we say an Action carries its own Reward, 'tis because of the satisfaction it gives us in hope of a Reward from Above.

Thirdly, If a Man be so supreme (as the Atheist will make him) to have nothing at all above him, there can never be possibly made by Him any distinction in his Actions: because he would be then under no Law but himself; and so could never come to break any Law by himself. He that is his own Law, can never come under any Transgression: nor can such a thing as Evil ever happen to be in an Independent Being. No Man can ever come to say, he does ill, without he be under the Law of a Superiour. By these things, 'tis plain, if there be no God, there can

be no such thing as a distinction of Good and Evil amongst Men : and without that, 'tis obvious into what dirt and meanness the whole World will crumble. There can be no such thing as Just and Unjust; no such thing as Property ; no such thing as Right in *meum & tuum*. For all these things, and every other thing that is either decent or useful, is grafted upon that distinguishing taste of Good and Evil, God has, by our *first make*, indued us withal : so that, without that, no Man can pretend Right to his Life or Estate, when another, that is a perfect Law to himself, has an opportunity and a will to take it away.

A second Consequence attending a company of Atheists without a God in their thoughts, is this; *They could never come to be secured one to another in such a way, as is absolutely necessary to uphold the frame of the World, and to keep Men safe in society and converse together.* If there were no ground for any Trust among Mankind, nor any way to create such a security amongst Men, as that they might be reasonably ascertained one to another; it were not possible they should ever come into any *political Association*, or live in a moral converse quietly together ; but must perpetually abide in a state of War, and still recur to open force.

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The World it self is so framed, that Men cannot live and converse together, without putting *some trust* each in other. All the matters of the World cannot be made sure. *Trust* is the first and chief ground of all humane Converse. Without that, each Man, when he met another, would suppose he met his Enemy ; and think himself safe in nothing, but the power of his own Defence. Now the great and only foundation, upon which all *trust* amongst Mankind is erected, is a general acknowledgment of a Supreme Power above them, that perfectly knows their Actions, and has power to Reward and Punish them : and a Principle in Men, which we call Conscience, that steers them with such an apprehension. If there be nothing *above Men* to punish them, of which they stand in awe, nor any innate Principle *within them*, to determine their own Actions about Good and Evil, it were absurd and foolish ever to trust any Man : because there could be no visible ground for such a Trust. An *Atheist*, that says, There is no God above him, nor any Conscience within him, must needs make himself his *own Law* ; and, by that, makes himself incapable of any Trust from another : For the great reason of Trust lies in Mens acknowledging Principles, that will bring them to deny

deny their own Interest, when Justice and Truth calls for it. The acknowledgment of God, and the exercises of Conscience, give Men a ground of security one in another: that when Mens private Interests oppose their doing what is just, and there is no power to force them; yet the Fear of God, and the excitements of Conscience may over-rule them. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that the general Awe of a God in the World, is the *invisible Guard of it*; and that grand Pillar by which the World is upheld, and made to consist within it self. Upon the *Atheists* Principles, all the foundations of Trust and Security are taken away. There can be no such thing as an Oath, no such thing as a Promise, nor a ground for any sort of Engagements, where there is no God: for in all those cases Men appeal from themselves to the Judgment of God. Who will ever trust another, when he is his own Law, and can offend none but himself? Nay, can never offend himself? For where a Man is *Supreme*, and is a Law to himself, he can never come to do any thing but *what is right*. Amongst pure *Atheists* there cannot be any sort of Confidence created. And that Confidence Mankind put one in another is the very Original and Cement of all Government, all Relations,

lations, all Trade, and all other converse of Men together. Take away God and Conscience once out of the World, and no man can be obliged to do, nor ever will do, any thing but just what he pleaseth. 'Twere a fond thing to think any man should; because there is not the least reason why he should. And in that case, no Man would ever trust to any Engagements from another, because there could be *nothing obligatory* in the making of them, and so not the least reason for the keeping of them; unless you will admit of a Supream Power above Men, to whose Judgment and Determination they all refer, and acknowledg themselves subjected; 'tis not possible to frame any ground, upon which Mankind should be ever obliged one to another.

Thirdly, *There could never possibly be any Government settled amongst Atheists*; which is the great Distinguisher of *Men* in their Societies, from *Beasts* in their Herds. Nay, without Government, Men would be worse than *Beasts* one to another, by how much the more Knowledge and Invention they are possessed with to do mischief. Without Government, all Men live in a state of War. Every man has a right to what he can get, and no right to any thing that he cannot keep. One says truly, *That Force*

Force and Fraud must needs be the two Cardinal vertues of such a condition. There never can be any Government settled amongst such Men, who overthrow the great and Supreme Rule over the World. Remove God once out of Heaven, and there never will be any Gods upon Earth. Mankind would never agree to subject themselves to Government, but that there is somewhat of the *Image of God* in it, to whom they pay a natural homage. These things following make it evident, there can never be any Government settled amongst meer Atheists. *First*, By their Principles, the end of Government is extinguished. For the end of Government (as *Aristotle*, in his *Politicks*, well describes it) is *reward and punishment*. But where there is no acknowledgment of a God, there can be no such thing as Good and Evil: and where there is not a distinction of Good and Evil, there can be no place for Reward and Punishment. For, being a *terror to Evil-doers*, and an *encouragement to them that do well* (the great hinge upon which all Government hangs) are those Principles God has, by natural light, placed in Men, to direct them how 'tis to be exercised and exerted. *Secondly*, By the Atheists Tenets, that, which should chiefly uphold and support the being

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of Government in the World, is razed and demolished: and that is, a *primary subjection to God*; which begets a *secondary subjection to Men*, as representing him, and exercising his Authority among them. He that thinks himself his *own God*, will be sure to be his *own King*. If there be nothing above the World, *Man*, I am sure, is the Supreme part of the World: and so must needs come to think himself an absolute and independent Being. And he that is so, can never make a distinction in any Action, nor never subject himself to any Person: because he is his own Law; and that Supremacy, which the *Magistrate* should exercise, every Atheist carries in his own Breast. *Thirdly*, There can be no ground for Superiority and Inferiority, nor any security given between Men, that should create such a Relation amongst them. No ground at all, I say, for it; for, Men that are lawless (which all Men must needs be supposed to be, if they have nothing above them) can never come to be governed. This the Atheist tacitly confesseth, when he tells us, That *Men invented the story of the Gods, and frightened Men therewith, that they might keep the World in subjection, and bring Men under Obedience to Government*. It could never enter into Mens minds to subject themselves, if they

they thought themselves supreme in their being, and had no Law but their own Wills. If Mans Nature had not somewhat of subjection in it to a Supreme Being above him, and inherent Principles obliging him how to behave himself toward God, and toward the rest of the World, Government could never have been introduced, nor thought of. Nor can there be the least mutual security between Governours and governed, where no God is admitted. For, as I proved before, 'tis an acknowledging of God, in his Supreme Judgment over the World, that is the ground of an Oath, and upon which, the validity of all humane engagements depends. All People in the World, have some God or other, by whom they put a sanction upon all their solemn Engagements one to another : and wherein they acquiesce as the highest security Mankind is capable of. And although Men are sometimes so vile as to break them, yet they thereby render themselves liable to all the Hatred, Reproach and Contempt imaginable : and declare themselves the public Enemies both of God and Man. And very often God makes them in this World the visible Objects of his Justice and Displeasure.

But suppose the Atheist object against this ;

this ; and say, *'Tis possible for Men that deny there is a God, or any such thing as a distinction between Good and Evil, for their interest's sake, to erect a Government over them, and submit themselves to it.*

I answer, that admit the interest of an Atheist should incline him to Government, yet his Principles are destructive to it, and make it impossible to be attained. For, *First*, There can be no rules for Government in such a case, neither how any Man shall Govern, nor how any Man shall Obey. For where there are no Principles, neither by Supernatural Revelation from God, nor by the Light of Nature in Men, to declare the Ends and Uses of Government, (as in this Case, amongst avowed Atheists who say there is no God, there can be none ;) there can be nothing but absolute Will and Pleasure : which can never come to be exercised, but where there is the greatest Strength. For if one Mans Will be as perfect and as absolute as anothers, he will never submit to the Will of another, but when he is forced to it. And let us but imagine what a thing Sovereign Power would be in the Hands of Men, where no God is owned, nor any distinction of Good and Evil acknowledged : it would necessarily induce a Slavery and Subjection

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on far worse than what any one Beast is at any time into another. The truth is, that where there are no Rules or Principles, to make a distinction between Men, and to be a ground of Superiority and Inferiority, 'tis not possible either to erect or to uphold such a kind a constitution as Government, any other way than by downright force.

And lastly, 'Tis not possible to be imagined, that the grand fundamental of all Government (which is, that all private personal Interests should voluntarily yield to the good of the whole) should ever come to be established among a company of perfect Atheists. 'Tis not to be imagined, that where a Man is Supreme in himself, and has no Principle but himself, that ever he should consent, in any case, to deny himself, to his own apparent prejudice. There can be no Reason thought of, why he should do it, but for interest and advantage: for he can have no other thing to be guided by. And *bare Interest* will never teach any Man *actual self-denial*, either for the Good of another, or for the Good of the whole. No Man (without some Conscience of obeying those that are over him, and without some natural conviction, that 'tis his Duty to prefer the whole of others before himself) will

will ever depart from his own particular interest, upon any Notion of the Publick whatsoever. Abstract God, and Conscience of well and ill-doing from Men, and no Man's Reason but will make himself his supream Law; and deny him to do any thing against himself, upon any collateral ground whatever. Yielding, in a man's own particular, to the good of the whole, is a noble beam of natural light springing from God; and from that Conscience of Good and Ill Men bring into the World with them, in reference to their duty toward others, and the rest of the World. God designed Man in his *make* for a sociable creature, and that Men should live quietly together; and that, in order to it, they should carry about them natural Obligations one to another. But no Man that has himself for his highest Principle, (which every Atheist must have) will ever prefer the Good of any, or of all Men, before his own. So that the Atheist, in denying the Being of God, destroys necessarily all those Principles which purely relate to his Being: And by that destroys all those Principles, by which the World is upheld and maintain'd.

These things seem with undeniable evidence to enlighten us in our way to God:

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and to shew us, what a dark *Chaos* of nonsense and confusion the whole of an Atheists Principles appears to the eye of our Reason. Which way ever we look, whether to the rise and beginning of the World, to the matter and parts of it, the present continuance of it, either to the Being or well-Being of it, we still find our Reason leading us safely to God. We find how necessary the acknowledgment of his Being is to our own, and to secure the political frame and composition of the World. *Cicero* in his first Book *De nat. Deor.* speaks largely and excellently upon this subject. Take away (says he) the Being and Providence of God out of the World, and there follows nothing but confusion: not only *Piety* and *Sanctity* is gone; but all *Faith*, *Vertue*, and humane Societies too. And of the same mind were *Plato* and *Plutarch*, who have largely discoursed this way. Nothing then can more endanger a State, than the encrease of Atheism; nor can any thing prove more destructive to all humane Converse and Society, and whatsoever relates both to the being and well-being of the World. The Atheist, as he is the greatest *Traitor* to the highest King above. so his Principles carry in them the most dangerous and destructive Treason to all his *Vicegerents* here below.

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The great Objection the Atheist continually makes against the whole of Religion is this; says he, *No Man ever saw the God you talk of; all discourses about such an Infinite Being as you talk of, are meer Fables and Stories, Fantasms in Mens brains; nor can you distinctly conceive any thing of him. 'Tis more suitable to Reason a great deal to believe only what I see, than to offer myself to be possessed with a belief of what I never saw.*

This that the Atheist boasts of as his chief support, he will find to fail him, and render him both grossly *disingenuous*, and palpably *unreasonable*. First, *disingenuous* and false to himself; for the Atheist himself; upon his own Principles, is forced to confess, *he believes things he never saw*; and cannot himself deny it. Take the *Epicurean Atheist*; did he ever, I wonder, see the *Atoms* he tells us of? *Lucretius*, and all the *Atomists* confess, that the business of *Atoms* is a thing that does not fall under the perception of Sense. Did he ever view their *Motion*; by which they caused the World? Did he ever take a view of that *vacuum*, that *ultra-mundan space*, where these

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Atoms

Atoms are treasured up? Did either of their great Masters, *Democritus* or *Epicurus*, ever assure the World that they *saw* these things? or were *eye-witnesses* to what they would have others believe? Or, was any Man ever yet heard of that did see them? Was there ever any such Tradition in the World, that they were seen? Take the other Sect of *Atheists*, that would have the World to be *eternal*, just as it is: and let them be asked, Can they have any *ocular* certainty of the Worlds Eternity? can they know any thing that way in the Age past before them? much less what was Eternal? Is not the *Worlds being Eternal*, as much a deduction from bare discourse and reasoning, as that *there is a Supreme Being*? If the Atheist resolve to believe nothing but what he *sees*, unless the World were made over and over, no Man can ever believe it, but those that just saw it made. Take all the Sectators of Atheism together, and let me ask them this question: Whether they can refuse to believe (without offering violence to their Faculties) that there is a principle of Motion in themselves, and many other parts of the World? And yet I am sure, they never *saw* it. Let any Man tell me, Whether ever he saw that Principle that acts himself?

self? call it the Soul, or what you will. Did he ever yet *see* his own thoughts? And yet we are not more sure of any one thing in this World, than that we *think*: and without that, we could never come to be sure of any thing. God has left us the noblest part of our selves *invisible*: (which yet we cannot refuse to believe, unless we cease the exercise of our own Faculties) that so we might have apparent Reason not to deny his Being, only because we do not *ocularly* behold him. The noblest and most peculiar part of Reason, is, to come to assurance of such things as we do not see. There are a thousand Propositions a Man may make sure to himself by his Reason, which have no way been the object of Sense. All the converse we have with things past, and things future, depends singly upon the exercise of Reason: for there Sense cannot help us. If the Atheist will see every thing he believes, he must never believe any *Sound*, nor any *Smell*. And (as one says well) there is as much Reason to deny that to be *sensible*, which is the Object but of one Sense, as to deny that to *be*, whose Existence is only the Object of Reason. The Senses, being upon even terms, may more reasonably combat each other in that case,

than the whole of Sense deny a single exercise of Reason; because Reason is a faculty more certain, and much superiour to it. And if ever the faculty of our Reason abstracted from Sense, can make us sure of any thing, 'tis in this case, about a *Supreme Being*. For in our selves we find an apprehension still of somewhat above us: a fear of him, and a tendency towards him; which must needs arise from some *innate Idea* we have in our Souls, of him. And this we are as sure of, as that *we think*; which is the thing, in the World, we can be most sure of. And these impressions of God, and the *Idea* we have in our selves of such a Supreme Being, does as much assure us, there is one; as our thinking does assure us that we our selves are, and that we have a thinking faculty. If we look out into the World, we shall find the *whole* (to our Reason) a most demonstrable effect of him. There can be nothing more plain to the Reason of Mankind, than that there must be some *first Cause* of every Being we see; and some first mover of all the Motion we behold. The Atheist is also further disingenuous in this: that, because he does not see God, (though there be never so much evidence of his Being) therefore he positively denies him, and says, *there is none*; which there may be, for

for ought he knows. No Man can, in the negative, say, *there is not*: nor lay down any tolerable ground to conclude such a negative upon; because there is not the least violence offered to our faculties, nor the least absurdity, either to Sense or Reason, in this Assertion, *That there is a Supreme Being Infinitely Perfect, that made all things*. Nor will the Atheist help himself at all, by retorting this, and saying; *If no Man can positively deny the Being of what he never saw; then we can never, by that Rule, deny the Atheists Hypothesis of Atoms, or of the Worlds Eternity: for they are all things alike unseen*. This I utterly deny: for, 'twere to make all things, we do not see, upon equal terms of Probation and Negation. Which were, upon the matter, to depose our Reason, and degenerate wholly into Sense. As if the Notion of God's making the World, (to which every thing rationally concurs,) and the first rise of it (supposed to be by the *casual hit of two Flints* together, or a *justling of Atoms* one against another, or the foolishlest proposition you can make) stood upon equal terms of admittance with a Rational Soul. And that one of these may be as well affirmed as the other:

and none of them certainly denied, because none of them *seen*. This is very absurd, and in its tendency plainly banishes Reason out of the World. *Probation* and *Negation*, in this and all other cases, are necessarily conjoined, and depend upon each other. For if one thing can be *better proved* than another, then 'tis *less to be denied* than another. And as the Affirmative of any thing appears more reasonable, the Negative of it must needs be the more unreasonable. And all things that *we see not* (as well as those *we see*) are capable of more or less probability, and more or less certainty to our Reason; and so have necessarily the same degrees in their Affirmations and Negations that all other things have. The way obviously to clear this, is to consider, Whether a Man may be certain of any thing he does not see; or whether all things unseen are alike uncertain? If the first be made good, the second I am sure is thereby rendered false: That a Man may be certain of things he never saw, I affirm, and that several ways: *morally* certain; *naturally* certain; and *mathematically* certain.

First, *Morally certain*. A Man, by the concurrence of all Circumstances and credible
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Testimonies about it, may be morally certain there is such a *City as Rome*, though he were never there. And if he should deny the Certainty of it to himself, must either violently assault his own Faculties, or render himself visibly impotent, and insufficient in the exercise of them. The ground of this *moral certainty*, and the Reason why, by credible Testimonies, I may arrive at a Certainty in such a way, is; because, that taking a measure of others by what I find in my self, or by what I see experimentally in the daily practice of Men, and in the course of the World, and in the Reason of the thing it self, such a Testimony must needs be true. Now suppose some, upon their own single credit, shall tell a Man of a Town built upon the *Waves*, and standing in the midst of the Sea; and that by *Chance* the Waves rowl so continually under it, as to keep it from sinking, and so it continually swims: will any Man (well in his Wits) say, that a *negative* to this, and a *Negative* to the being of such a place as *Rome*, are upon even terms? And that a Man that has seen neither, may not upon better terms deny the one than the other?

Secondly, I may be *naturally* certain of somewhat I do not see, by the fixedness
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and intrinsic certainty of Nature in its Causes and Productions. I am *naturally certain* I have thoughts and reason; and yet they are no-way the object of Sense. I am naturally certain I was begotten by a Man, and brought forth by a Woman. If any man will tell me, I was begotten by a Fly; or that a Whirlwind casually blew some Dust together, and that, by that Matter and Motion, I came by Chance to be made: because I never *saw* the one more than the other, have I no more Reason to deny the one than the other? If I can prove by Reason, that the World could not be brought forth by the *casual motion of Atoms*; nor be Eternal in the posture it now is, (which it must have been, if it be Eternal;) have not I more Reason to deny those Things, than an Atheist has to deny the Being of God, that hath a full conjunction of Reason to prove it; because they are all things *unseen*?

Thirdly, I may be *Mathematically certain* of a thousand Propositions, which I only revolve in my Thoughts, and were never visibly represented to my Senses: and am as well able to judge of an absurdity in my Thoughts and my Mind, and to affirm and deny things of that nature,

ture, as if I saw the lines visibly drawn before me. So 'tis in all speculative matters: and in all other matters, things unseen must be judged of by things seen, and according to things known; and so are more or less probable, according to the proportion they bear to our Reason exercised about such things. Reason has been ever the same; and the great Standard to determine all things by. What is an *Absurdity* now, was ever so since the World began, and will continue so. Reason will as well determine about matters we never saw, as about things visible to our Senses. He that will tell me of a Castle built upon a Bulrush, and a Steeple upon the foundation of a Straw; my Reason will soon give him an Answer, and look no further. Nor ought bare Probabilities, where there is no apparent Absurdity to steer us at all. But in the Atheists case, his Assertions are not *Possibilities*: for, if our faculties be not fallible, and deceive us, they are *positive Absurdities*. I say, bare Possibilities ought not to steer us at all: because a bare Possibility is not any thing that appears to us to have any actual Existence; but only a result from this Negative, that [*'tis not a Contradiction, and so, not impossible.*] From whence we may deduce endless *Chimeræ*,
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and all the foolish fancies imaginable. A Man, in that case, is bounded with *nothing* but a *flat contradiction*; and so may intangle himself with all the *possible fooleries* that can be in the World. 'Tis possible, that Trees do hear when we speak, and that Stones do see us and look upon us; 'tis not impossible, because 'tis not a contradiction. But to make such things to have any Power to influence or guide the rational Soul, were highly to reproach our Faculties, and to make them so weak and unstedfast, as that the use of them would be thereby rendred far beneath what it truly and really is. Bare possibility ought not to entangle us in our assent or dissent to any thing: because 'tis positively nothing; does not *ponere aliquid*; but has only a bare negative supposition of existence, in not being impossible. 'Tis possible a Plant or Vegetable may have a rational Soul: because 'tis not a contradiction, and so not impossible; though we see no effects or concomitants of a Rational Soul in it. But, whoever should let this *bare possibility* steer him, would much affront the certainty of his Reason, which ought not, by such a possibility, to be hindred from the certain knowledg of the nature of a Plant: because that were to imagine Reason to be

be ruled by a *may-be*, a *naked possibility* (which is a *non-entity*) against what really and actually *is*. He that comes only with a bare possibility, to confute me in any thing for which I bring proof, and give good Reason, comes *with just nothing*: because all things *possible* to be, are no way *necessary* to be. That were to make a contradiction necessary: because things may be, and may not be; and therefore where there is no actual demonstration that they *be*, the possibility lies equal on both sides, and is determined by the proofs on either side. Possibility is only previous to proof, and admits it, but is no proof at all it self. Impossibility forbids all proof; possibility makes way for it, and does no more. This will appear evidently true, [that bare naked possibility is no Argument at all: nor is of any force, singly, either to prove or deny a thing;] if we do but consider, that if *possibility* were any proof, then in all things where there is *possibility* on both sides, there were good proof on both sides; which to say, were to make our faculties false and a most notorious absurdity, [that a thing might be proved to be, and proved not to be.] For 'tis not, whether there be possibility on both sides; for that there is; and that is no more than

than to say, if a thing be, or if it be not, there is no contradiction either way, and so no impossibility either way. But if Possibility be made of any force to affirm or deny a thing, than possibility is supposed to make a proof: and then it must needs make it both ways; and prove a thing may be, and prove a thing may not be, because 'tis both ways possible. 'Tis plain therefore, that bare possibility is no proof at all any way: and whenever the Atheist recurs to bare *Possibility* to help him, he recurs to meer *Nullity*. He says, a thing *is*, because it *may be*, and *'tis not*, because it *may not be*: which (as to the proof of it, either way, either to its being, or not being) amounts to just nothing. In some cases, Impossibility proved of the one side, carries Necessity on the other side. But whatsoever leaves things in such an *Equilibrium* as Possibility does, (which says, they may be, or they may not be) can never certainly prove the *being* of them either way.

The *disingenuity* of the Atheist will also further appear to us, if we consider, that he himself admits Invisibilty and Infinity in his own supposed notions about the World; and yet objects against them, when they are ascribed to God. He admits them in subjects we know are no way capable of them; and

and yet denies them, when they are most properly attributed to one Supreme Being Infinitely Perfect. He that will suppose *Matter*, with an inherent *Motion* in it, *Infinite*, must needs suppose it to have all possible Perfection. For whatsoever has *Infinity* and *self-origination*, must needs swallow up all Perfection into it self; or else no Being were capable of Perfection. Now let us once exclude the Notion of God out of the World, and where will you (with any tolerable Sense, and without apparent absurdities) place *Infinity* with absolute Perfection? The Notion we have in our minds of such a thing, plainly tells us there is such a thing. And our Reason assures us, it can be fixed no-where, but in a Supreme Being, which we call God. The World is, in its constitution, such a thing, and so related to God, that the greatest shifters off of Divinity cannot give any tolerable account of the being of it to any reasonable Creature, without appropriating those things, they most find fault with, and cavil at in the Notion of God, to some part of the World. Either they make the World *Infinite* just as it is; or else some small *particles of matter* with an *inherent Motion* in them, they must be Eternal. This shews a *necessity of Eternity* somewhere: and that all things that
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are, must needs come from somewhat that ever was, by the Judgment of every Rational Creature; and that all Mankind have naturally a Notion and Idea of Eternity within them. So that whoever denies the Being of God, when he goes to give a Reason of his denial, is forced to confess and admit those things, which, he says, are the grounds of his denial: and so makes it a thing not only of the very same, but of ten times greater difficulty to believe, there is no God, than to confess there is one. For when he goes about to give a Reasonable Account, how the World could come to be without some first Cause; he is forced to admit all those things he himself objects against a first Cause; and besides, lies under all those absurdities the Being of the World will cast upon our Reasons, when we go about to give an account of it, excluding the Notion of a God and a first Cause from it.

And as the Atheist is exceeding disingenuous in his Principles and Objections, so he is monstrously *unreasonable*: *First*, In this that he ascribes the World to Causes that have the highest *improbability*, and (in some cases) *impossibility*, to our Reason, plainly attending them *First*, 'Tis plainly *impossible* that the World in the course we now see it, should have been Eternal, according to that

that *Idea* our Souls are able to make of Eternity. For though we are not able to give a full description of what is Eternal; yet we are able to say *negatively* what we are sure cannot be Eternal. Suppose Eternity to be never so much beyond me, and above me; yet 'twere absurd for me to admit any thing to be Eternal, that does not reach the Notion I have of Eternity.

But grant to the Atheist the most he pretends to, which is, that there is a bare *possibility* that the World *may* have been Eternal; and that there is no contradiction to say so; I think I have fully proved, that *bare possibility* is no proof at all; nor ought to have the least sway with any reasonable Man, in the affirmation or negation of any thing. And therefore when the Atheist recurs (as generally he doth) to bare possibility to support his Notions, he is driven beyond the confines of all rational proof, and endeavours to make something of an absolute nothing. He takes that for proof, which only gives an admission that there may be proof.

Take him in the other way, in the Notion of his *Atoms*, from whence he will needs derive the World: what an Aspect
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doth it carry to our Reason? *to imagine that Atoms, in a fancied vacuity, had an Eternal gravity in them, which caused an Eternal Motion of them up and down, without any tendency at all to a Center? and that they could never cease their Motion, till they hit by Chance one against another, and were diverted that way? that this dull matter, and this senseless motion in it, caused by the Internal Gravity of it, did by Chance produce this Glorious Fabrick of a rational Soul? and so did transfer that to another, which it had not first in it self? And that by the Chance and Casualty of the Motion of these Atoms, the World, and all the Order and Harmony of it, was first produced.* The Atheist, in this, will never arrive at bare possibility. For the whole of it (so far as it is urged against God's making the World, and made use of to self-originate the World) is a perfect *Systeme of Nonsense*. He that says the World was made by Chance, does, in effect say, [*He cannot tell how it was made: and that when we deny God to be the Author of it, we can give no reasonable account of it.*] The Atheist is also further unreasonable, because he denies the Being of that, which the World is a plain Effect of, and the Contemplation of the whole World doth rationally lead us unto. He denies also that to be, which we have an innate

innate Notion of in our own Souls, which is, a Supreme Being, absolutely Perfect: which the whole World will not afford us, nor can we fix our Notion of it upon any thing visible. The capacity a Man has, some way to conceive of such a thing as a Supreme and Perfect Being, doth evidently declare there is such a Being that gave that capacity. He that goes about either to doubt it, or deny it, must in some measure admit it, or else he doubts and denies he knows not what. For when any Man disputes against a thing, 'tis granted he has a capacity to conceive of such a thing, or else he could not oppose it. Had there not been a Supreme Being which we call God, there could never have been any innate Notions of it in the minds of Men, in Fears, Hopes and Concerns about him, as such. No Man ever had an *original innate impression of a lye*, a pure nothing upon his intellect. That were to say, our faculties were originally false: and so we are nothing but a great deceit to our selves. Nay, to this day, no Man ever thought of a meer Nothing. Thoughts and Existence are relatives! *Nonnatus nulla cogitatio*. The wildest *Fantasms* that ever possessed the minds of Men, were yet still conversant about somewhat that was real and had existence: and were but

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disordered and misplaced by the fancy. Let a Man imagin Oxen feeding in the bottom of the Sea: and Whales grazing upon dry ground; or Mountains dancing in the Air; or any thing of that kind: the ground of all these imaginations is real things, and such as do exist. They are only dislocated by the fancy, and disposed by the mind contrary to the course of Nature: and so (in that disposition and conjunction) are meer *fantasms*; and *entia rationis*. But this we call an *Idea* of God, is quite another thing; 'Tis not a fictitious representation the mind makes to it self, from a collection of visible Objects, and corporeal fantasms; but 'tis a Notion of a Being abstractedly considered, from whatever came in by the Senses; which can be no other but an *Idea* placed originally in the Soul, by an Infinite and Perfect Being that first made it. A Man finds in his own Soul, he can conceive there is such a Being, but yet cannot describe him by any thing he ever saw. By which 'tis plain, the Notion of such a Being came not in by the Senses. Whatever is the Object of Sense, hath infirmity annexed to it, because 'tis still divisible; and therefore a Notion of Absolute and Infinite Perfection could not arise from thence. Nor is it possible to believe, that ever Mankind should

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bow down themselves, in that subjection they are in to the Notion of a Deity, if the Notion of it were nothing but a vain fancied collection of things disorderly together, in the mind, that had come in by the Senses. For they must needs know by the use of their Reason, that such things had no Existence in such Conjunction, but were a perfect Vanity. Nor is there, in the Notion of God, any unnatural disorderly conjunction of things together: but all those Attributes we ascribe to God, do naturally and necessarily make up the Notion of him, and cannot be separated from it. Several steps our pure Naturals take towards a Supreme Being, to satisfy and confirm us in the unreasonableness of an Atheist.

First, Our Reason considers the whole World is without a first Cause of any thing; and yet the Constitution of it, is such, that without some first Cause, we can give no reasonable account of any thing. We can never reasonably be satisfied, how Men should come to beget one another in the way we see, without some first Man that was *not begotten* in that way, Which first Man must necessarily conduct us to some first and Supreme Cause.

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Secondly,

Secondly, Reason considers it self the Supreme part of the World : and knows, by its own exercise, it could not be begotten by it self. For that were to contradict its self, and deny its own Evidence. And so comes to adore somewhat above it self, and more excellent than it self; of which it has a natural *inbred Idea*.

Thirdly, Reason lays down this as a fundamental *Maxim* to it self; That whatever we are able to think or imagine, of absolute Goodness, Perfection, Infiniteness, or Excellency of any kind, it must necessarily exist in this *first Cause*; who gave us this ability to think and conceive of such things, and made us with such an Idea. So that to the utmost of what a Man can do, to think well of God, and highly to adore him, his Reason leads him to; and he can go no further.

Fourthly, 'Tis highly reasonable to conclude, that he that was the first *Donor* of our Beings, must needs have an absolute *property* in us; and so we lye under an obligation to all the Homage we are able to perform. Because the donation of a Being to us, is the Supreme Obligation that could be put upon us. And whatsoever this Supreme

Supreme Being, that gave us our own Being, shall at any time reveal to us to be his pleasure about us, we stand for ever obliged to Obey and Submit to.

Fifthly, Our Reason tells us, that whatsoever we can conceive of the wisest Builder, must be much more in God's framing the World. He would not make the World without some proposed end; which could be no other but what best pleased himself. That Faculty, that informs us of a Supreme Power that made the World, will also ascertain us that he can uphold it, will govern it; and at last, have an account of it, according to that end he first proposed to himself in making it.

Sixthly, We find in our own Souls, a distinguishing taste of Good and Evil; and a Judgment we necessarily, and naturally pass upon our selves, in reference to the one, and the other; being much satisfied in the one, and filled with Terroures and Fears by the other. And our Reason tells us, all this must needs be, in order to a *Supreme Judgment* above us; and was placed in us, by a *Supreme Being* that first made us. Were there nothing above our selves, we could have no higher end than to please our selves.

selves. When Men find, in their own Souls, Troubles arising from those Actions that please them most, and which are no way cognizable, nor punishable perhaps in this World; that plainly relates it self to somewhat above and beyond themselves. The truth is, our own Souls determine, within our selves, the great end of all our Actions to be pleasing or displeasing to God.

Seventhly, and lastly, In full answer to the Atheists Objection: my Reason will tell me that *God's being not seen by me*, should no way hinder, but further my belief of his Being and Existence.

First, Because I find enough in mine own Make and Constitution to inform me of Him; *naturally* an inbred fear of Him; an admiration of Him, attendency still toward Him; of which I am as sure, as that I am sure *I think*; which is the surest Evidence I can have, that *I am*; and an ability, in mine own understanding, to *Reason* all the World up to Him, and derive all things from Him.

Secondly, When I consider that this Supreme Being does necessarily exist, He must then be Infinite; (for God and Infinite are inseparable.) And if He be Infinite, He must
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also then be Invisible to a Finite Being. If He were visible to any thing *finite*, He could not himself be Infinite, and then He could not be God. How absurd therefore to our Reason is it, to desire to *see such a Being* as we ascribe to God! I cannot grasp Infinite in my mind; much less then can I make it the Object of my sight. Infinite could not be Infinite, were it any way comprehensible. Mine Eye cannot view the whole World at once, which yet is Finite and circumscribed: much less, what is boundless and Infinite. 'Tis a mean and narrow design, to confine the Notion of God and his Being to our *Eye-sight*, when we have so much a nobler capacity to give us a view of Him. Especially when we consider we cannot see the noblest part of our selves, which is our own Souls: nor are we able to converse by our *Sight* with such things, as are proper Objects for it, but we are soon at a loss. We cannot look upon the Heavenly Bodies, so as to compass their dimensions in our *Eye-sight*. What small things are the Sun, Moon and Stars, to him that is no otherwise informed than by his Eyes? The least distance out-does our sight, and deceives us. And yet nothing will serve the Atheist but an *ocular view of an Infinite Being*. 'Twere much more practicable

ble and reasonable to say, he would not believe there was such a thing as the *Sea*, unless he could take it up in the Palm of his Hand. Nor will not be satisfied that the Sun is a body of Light, by the Beams of it, unless he can put it into a Lanthorn.

This discovers to us the grounds of that *natural Religion* that directly opposeth an Atheist in the whole of his undertaking. The Fundamentals of this *natural Religion* are fixed, and secured: *First*, In that original Impression God left of himself, upon us at our first make. And *Secondly*, In the true exercise of that faculty, we call Reason. 'Tis this natural Universal Religion by which God intended to uphold the Frame and Being of the World: and without which, it cannot subsist. Here ought Uniformity to be expected, and strictly required. Things Supernatural have not had that Universality; but have been the peculiar happiness and advantage of some times, and some places: and are not *essentially* necessary to the Frame and Being of the World.

Nor will the Atheist, in the least, invalidate the truth of this *natural Religion*, by saying, *There are very few that have such an exercise*

exercise of Reason as to arrive at such Principles. For when we say any thing is reasonable, we need say no more of it, than that it is attainable by Reason. We speak of what is virtually in that Principle, what it may do: not what every individual Man does in the exercise of it. What is in it self intrinsically reasonable, and will appear so to Men when they make use of their Reason, we may well call reasonable, though there be never so few that attain to an understanding of it. How many Conclusions are there in *Geometry*, and *Mathematicks*, that are in themselves perfectly reasonable and true, and will appear so to every Mans Reason, when he will make a right use of it: And yet there are perhaps, at the present, very few in the World that understand them. And were he not a very vain Man, that would therefore deny the Reason of them, and so consequently admit nothing to be reasonable or true, but what every individual Person actually comprehends and assents to?

Thus, *my Lord*, I have led you through a *Wilderness*; a discourse unpolished; without the common high-ways of *Method*, and such *artificial Ornaments*, as we have to please us, in those places where we chuse

to live, beyond what we find where we are sometimes forced to *travel*. When you reflect upon the Journey you have had through these Papers, I can provide nothing to make you admit it tolerably pleasant; but to tell you, that you have all the way, seen a *Pillar of Fire*, and *Pillar of Cloud*: you have seen a dark-side, and a light-side; the *Atheists dark-side*, the Cloud of Absurdity and Folly that hangs over him; how weak that Man is, that fights against God: his own Reason disarms him, and he becomes a Captive to himself. You have seen a *light-side* also, those clear perspicuous Evidences we have of God: and that he walks not in the dark, but has lighted us to himself, by the bright beams of our Understandings: and has commissioned the *meanest Creature* we converse with, and made it his Ambassadour to treat with us about him; and written his *Credential Characters* upon the whole World, and given it in charge to declare his Being. This we have made Canonical by two good Authors; *David* tells us, *The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy-work*. And *St. Paul* delivers it as a great Oracle of Divine Truth, *That the invisible things of God from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood*
by

by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead. In Man, above all the rest, he has fixed a perpetual Memorial of himself; and obliged him to a peculiar adherence to his Creator, in that he has honoured him with *his Image*; that so he should never deny his God, but he should fall below himself: nor *blaspheme* that supreme Being, without *defiling* his own. He has stamped his Image and Superscription upon Man, that so he might know whose he is, and to whom, as a due tribute, he ought still to render himself. That Divine Spark, that heavenly Image, that rational Soul, is that noblest part of the World, wherein God chiefly inthrones himself, and by which he puts in his claim to the whole that he has made. Nor can Man (that is so qualified, that finds a tincture of Divinity in his composition; that carries about him such internal rays of rational Light, and moves under that conduct, when he is truly himself) ever make this visible World his ultimate Center. The more vigorous and enlarged the Soul is, the sooner it surfeits with the whole of the World: and when it has tried the utmost of it, denies it self satisfied, and claims a relation to somewhat above it, and beyond it. Had the whole of the World been for ever nothing but a continued
circle

circle of it self; were Mankind at the top of their *Pedigree* in things visible; could they derive themselves no higher than bare *matter* and *motion*, the Mind could never travel beyond those confines. Were this World the highest *Original* of Man, it must needs contain his *ultimate* satisfaction, and be the perfect boundary of his Soul. No Cause ever produced an Effect with a principle beyond it self; nor did ever any Man press after that, which he had not first an *Idea* of in his own breast. The World could never stamp any Character upon its Offspring but it self; nor propagate a *Genius* above its own: nor can it further those *noble Sallies* the Soul makes beyond it. The tendency we are made with to a supreme and perfect Being, plainly tells us, such a Being does exist. Whenever we deny those transparent effects of a Deity in our selves; and would cancel that innate *Idea* God has left of himself within us; and make a nullity of those hopes and fears we find relating to somewhat above us; we may with equal reason oppose the truth of our own Affections and Passions, and cease to be sure of whatever our Souls inform us. And while we contend against the real Existence of a supreme Being, we deny the truth of our own faculties. For whatever
can

can ascertain us there is no God, may go far to assure us that we are in our own beings, *nothing but a great Cheat to our selves.*

My Lord, I have now taken my leave of the Atheist. What the success of our Encounter has been, rests with you to determine. I know there is an *Excise and Custom* to be payed to the *Criticks* of this Age, before any thing can freely pass; of which I am no way careful. I mean hereafter to be as little concerned about the *Atheist*, as he can be about Religion: and to create no more trouble to my self, where I have arrived at a perfect satisfaction. If nothing will serve his turn but a *Negative*, upon that, which himself and every thing besides is an Affirmation of, let him feed upon his own Distemper, and feast himself with his own Disease. 'Tis not to be denied, but that a Rational Conquest is there least to be hoped for, where the Understanding is but a second to the Will; and the rectitude of the Judgment truckles to the violence of inclination. No Map can be drawn, wherein we can have a clearer Prospect, that a Man is sunk beneath himself, and struggles under a defection from a primitive *Oeconomy*, than that his Will sometimes gives the Law, and plays the Tyrant
over

over the rest of his Faculties. 'Twas at this back door of the *Will*, that *Atheism* first entered. 'Twas the *desire* Men had, there should be no God, that first cheated the Understanding, or at least bribed it, to dispute against him. No Mans Reason would ever have attempted to derive the World from any thing but God, had not the *Will* been in open Hostility with him; and declared War against that Interest, that stood up for God in the Soul. However the *Atheist* may indulge himself in his own absurdities; yet having weighed him in the Ballance of right Reason, and finding his Principles light, empty, full of falshoods and contradictions; and in the complex of them, a *meer nothing*; I have taken him as one legally condemned, and do think my self reasonably justified to *hang him up in Effigie*. And therefore, as the most pertinent *Appendix* to this Discourse, I have presented your *Lordship* with an *Atheists Catechism*; wherein you shall see him *Epitomized*, and an endeavour to represent an *Image* of him, as much to the Life as so small a Figure will afford.

My Lord, I have, by this, performed but a part of my Duty to you: my first intention did much exceed what I have been yet

yet able to accomplish. Two further attempts were designed to accompany these Papers. First, *A rational proof, that the Scriptures are undoubtedly and truly the Word of God*: And that we have reason abundantly sufficient to acquiesce in them as such. Where I would have imployed that little strength I have, to have rescued them from some violent hands that are lately laid upon them; and justified their *divine Authority* against the perverse Discourse of absurd and *illogical men*. And Secondly, Have adventured in a Scripture-glass, to have represented to you the excellency of that admirable contrivement, *Of saving men by JESUS CHRIST*: to which right Reason, as well as the Scripture, is an entire witness. Wherein we shall find all things concurring, that might become the designs of *infinite Wisdom*, in magnifying it self; and reach the whole of mens concerns, in the utmost of their Exaltation and Happiness. How far opportunity will ever encourage the execution of the first intentions; whether I shall be able to advance another step beyond this ground I have been now endeavouring to make good; is a question lies unresolved in the Womb of *Futurity*. What has already adventured your

*Lordships view, this small Essay towards the publick service of Religion, I am sure you will at the same time pardon and accept. As you are too just to blame a mean crop, when you consider it comes from an hungry Soil; so you are too wise to waste expectation, where you must needs be denyed a return; or to cast away the least hope of any thing valuable, from one that has attained no further amongst Mankind, than that inconsiderable Roman, who had nothing to boast of, but a *jus trium liberorum*. 'Tis enough to my self, I have obeyed your Lordship; who by the choice of this Subject, did at once both command and oblige me. It will be ever a pleasure to me any way to avow those manifold Obligations I have to you: nor will I ever cease to do it. Resolving never to forfeit my own Truth to my self, nor to become a sufferer under that uneasie reproach of Ingratitude.*

An



An Atheist's

C A T E C H I S M.

Quest.



O you believe there is a God?

A. No: I believe there is none.

Q. What is the true ground of your belief?

A. Because I have no mind there should be one.

Q. What other Reason do you give for it?

A. Because I never saw him.

Q. If there be a God, must he not be Infinite, and so Invisible?

A. Yes, if there be one, he must.

Q. Why then do you demand to see him?

A. Because I know I cannot see him, and so may have a sure ground to deny him.

Q. If there be no God, how came this World to be?

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A.

A. *It made it self by meer chance.*

Q. *After what manner was it first pieced together ?*

A. *By a casual hit of Atoms one against another.*

Q. *How came those Atoms so to hit one against another ?*

A. *As they were Eternally dancing about, in an Infinite space.*

Q. *Whence came the Reason of Mankind ; and all that order and regularity we find in the World ?*

A. *From the meer accidental conjunction of those Atoms.*

Q. *What is that Men call Religion ?*

A. *A politick Cheat put upon the World.*

Q. *Who were the first contrivers of this Cheat ?*

A. *Some cunning-Men that designed to keep the World in Subjection and Awe.*

Q. *What was the first ground of it ?*

A. *Men were frighted with Tales, that were told them, about invisible nothings.*

Q. *When did this fright first seize Men ?*

A. *'Tis very long ago : and (for ought we can find) 'tis as old as the World it self.*

Q. *Has this fright upon Men been general ?*

A. *Yes : The whole World in all Ages of it, have been possessed with a fear of nothing.*

Q.

Q. *What is the great end that every Man is to live to ?*

A. *To please himself.*

Q. *How prove you that ?*

A. *Because there is nothing above him : and so he is his own Law.*

Q. *Are Men to make any distinction in their Actions ?*

A. *No further, nor upon no other account, but as they please or displease themselves.*

Q. *Is there any such thing as Good and Evil ?*

A. *No ; 'tis a distinction the World hath been cozened with.*

Q. *When was that distinction first brought into the World ?*

A. *'Tis of the same date with those fables about a Deity ; and relates wholly to them.*

Q. *Is there any thing for a Man to hope for, or stand in fear of beyond this World ?*

A. *No, nothing at all.*

Q. *What becomes of a Man when he dies ?*

A. *He returns into his first Atoms.*

Q. *What becomes of those Atoms ?*

A. *They still help to carry on the great round of the World.*

FINIS.



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by Nath. Ponder at the Peacock in Chancery-Lane
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או

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Hoc est Domus Mosaicæ Clavis: sive Legis
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