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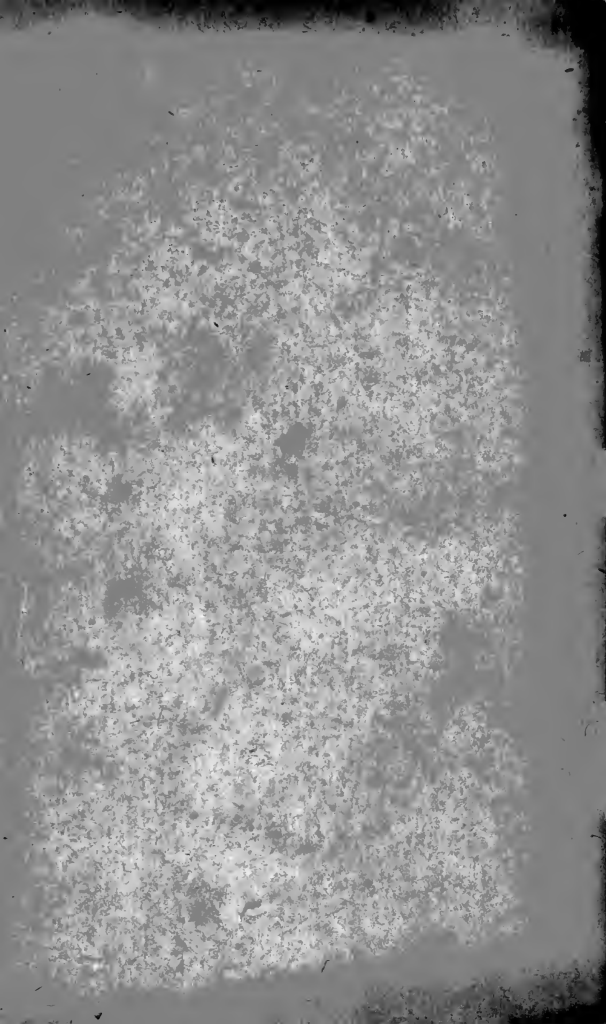
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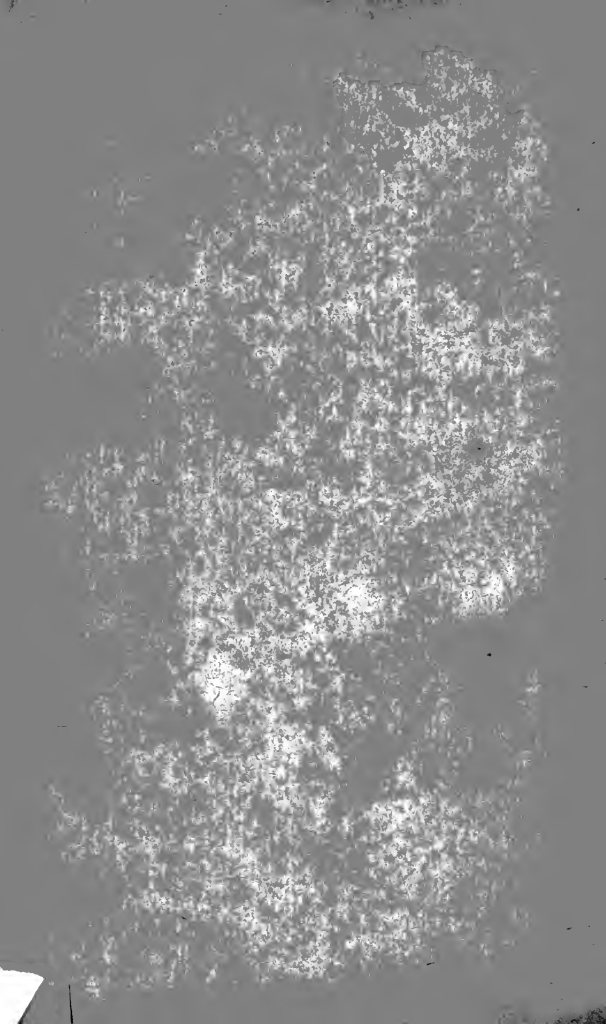
Section

Number

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A
DISCOURSE
Concerning the
PERIOD

OF
Humane Life:

Whether
Mutable or Immutable.

The Second Edition Corrected.

By the Author of *The Duty of Man*
laid down in Express Words of
Scripture.

Richard Allestree

L O N D O N,
Printed by J. R. for Enoch Wyer,
at the *White Hart* in *St. Pauls*
Church-Yard, 1677.

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Jan. 24. 1677.

1836



To the Honourable
Colledge of Physitians
at London.

Generous Gentlemen,

That I presume to pre-
fix your great Name
to so mean a Book,
proceeds not from any confi-
dence I have of its value;
but from the nature of the
Discourse, which your ex-
cellent Profession is so much
concerned in. For I must
say, that since I could under-
stand

The Epistle

stand the Debate, I have thought their opinion, who maintain the Period of every Mans Life to be unalterably fixed by an absolute Decree, does endanger your Profession so much, that the truth is, if it be true, you may seek out some new World for your Practice; for here you should be only like the Idol-Gods, who could neither do good nor evil.

This the excellent
Jo. Beverovicus did
prudently

Dedictory.

prudently foresee, and partly endeavored to satisfy both himself and others, by asking the advice of the Learned men of his age.

But that the Period of Humane Life may be both extended and shortened, common experience does sufficiently attest. How many have been hurried to their Graves by the unskilfulness of Empericks; and are there not multitudes also that can witness, you have been (un-

The Epistle

der God) the cause their
Lives have been prolong-
ed.

Gentlemen, I know
you can expect no Pana-
gyrick from such an
unfit person as I acknow-
ledge my self to be. And
methinks I also hear all
men say, that that is a
business only for a Ho-
mer to perform. If the
meanness of this Present
be censured by some, yet
I know you are more ge-
nerous, especially since the
be-

Dedicatory.

*bestowing of a more valuable
and signal evidence of re-
spect, is only impeded by the
inability of,*

Honored Gentlemen,

Your most devoted

Servant.



THE
PREFACE

Reader, *the following Discourse is of so small bulk, that a Preface may seem as needless, and ridiculous as an Index. In some few hours it may be perused, and then both the design of the Author and of the Book may be known. It may be thou desirest to know what was the occasion of the following Discourse. But I know not if I be obliged to answer this and such like idle questions; yet to satisfy thy curiosity, know, that the Author was unhappily engaged to converse with a Society of men; who frequently debated this and such like queries; and mostly he was opposed by the greater part, as maintaining an unreasonable position. Whether their charge be true or false, is a thing better determined by others unconcerned, than either by them or me. I*

A 2 know

The Preface.

know very well their clamorous calumnies and reproaches, which since I cannot shun; I shall endeavor to slight, as indeed unworthy to be regarded.

If men of good consideration dislike any thing in the Discourse, I promise them, upon Information I shall either endeavor to satisfy them, or to rest satisfied with what they say. Nay further, if there be any Line in it inconsistent with Piety and Religion, freely reject it; for I persuade thee (if the Author knew any such) he would burn the Book for its sake.

But I hope upon trial there shall be found no harsh notion in it to offend the most squeamish conscience. For the opinion I have rejected is, in my judgment inconsistent with the Divine Goodness and Holiness, repugnant to the freedom of Humane Nature, and destructive of all lawful means for the preservation of a mans life. Whils as that sentiment I embrace, begets in mens minds, noble and generous conceptions to promote real Piety and Religion, and to shun all manner of wickedness and intemperance; upon the account that Piety is the means to prolong our lives, and wickedness the cause of our short lives. And that this is no cheat or delusion, the wisest of men hath left upon record, PRO. I I.

The Preface.

19. As righteousness tendeth to Life, so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death. *This brings to my memory the Psalmists advice, with which I shall conclude*; What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, and thy Lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and pursue it. But the wicked and deceitful man shall not live out half his days.

O F



OF THE
PERIOD
 OF
Humane Life :

JOB 14. 5, 6.

Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.

Turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

THis excellent Book of *Job* represents to us a plain and unquestionable instance of the various successses all Humane actions are liable to, and of the promiscuous administration of Divine Providence to particular persons.

sons. Here we may read of Job's happy and flourishing condition, that *he was the greatest of all the men of the East*; and of his low and afflicted state, poor even to a Proverb, and in a condition that only pleaded pity and compassion; and how again *the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning*.

From this various administration of Providence, men have taken occasion to make divers inferences. The scoffing Atheist hath from thence wickedly concluded, that God hath no care of Humane Affairs. If God (say these scoffers) had any care of this World, he would never suffer those men who have corrupted their ways by Treachery and Deceit, to prosper and enjoy an affluence of all worldly delights; whereas the vertuous and godly man, who takes heed to his ways, lest he sin, and who throughout the whole course

course of his life hath carefully studied to *keep a conscience void of offence towards God and Man*, is notwithstanding a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; as plagued all the day long, and chastened every Morning, and hath waters of a full Cup wrung out to him. If God (say they) concerned himself with Humane Affairs, he would never suffer the *Tabernacles of Robbers to prosper*, and the House of the Upright to be ruined and destroyed.

This is without all contradiction a great stumbling-block and offence to the Blind Atheist; and hath even been a sad trial to the best of Gods people, *wherefore does the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very Treacherously?* Was a question *Jeremy* could hardly at first resolve. And we find *Job* and the Prophet *Habakkuk* very much puzzled with it; and the
Psalmist

Psalmist plainly confesseth, that his feet were almost gone, and that his steps had well nigh slipt, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, Psal. 73.

To see bad men prospering in their wicked purposes and undertakings, and good men unsuccessful and frustrated in their just attempts, has been none of the least **Topicks** the *Epicurean* Atheists have made use of, in their exempting this World from the Divine Rule and Dominion. It was this single consideration that made *Cato* (who was once a Preacher of Providence; how Orthodox, I enquire not) accuse the Dominion and Government of the gods, of instability and unjustness, that *Cæsar* who tyrannically invaded the Rights of the Commonwealth of *Rome*, should be successful in so unjust attempts; and *Pompey* put to the worst, and overthrown in the lawful defence of his Country:

try: this stumbled him exceedingly. 'Tis true, some few of the Learned and Sober Heathens did not thus rashly fall foul upon Providence; but very wisely inferred the being of a future State, where the vertuous shall be rewarded, and the vitious punished. And those Holy men in Scripture, who did *fret because of the prosperity of the wicked*, quickly perceived their folly and error, and that the wicked were only fed like Sheep for the Slaughter; and as the Poet excellently expresth it, *tolluntur in altum ut lapsu graviore ruant.*

Job's Friends, though they did not directly fall foul upon the Divine Providence, yet it is evident they were of opinion, that God would never have afflicted Job with such sad calamities, if he had been upright and sincere. Remember (saith Eliphaz) *who ever perished being innocent? Or where*

where were the Righteous cut off?
 ch. 4. 7. Bildad tells Job, *If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee,* ch. 8. 6. To both these Zophar succeeds with a charge as grievous and bitter, *For thou hast said my Doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes: But O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee,* ch. 11. v. 4, 5.

These were the Cordials Job's Friends afforded him, while as his afflicted condition pleaded pity from his Friends. These accusations were heavy; but he saw it was needless to tell them, that God might destroy the perfect as well as the wicked; and although he would not plead *not guilty*; for then he confesseth *his own lips should prove him perverse*; yet he humbly conceived, that it was a dangerous principle to conclude love or hatred from any such outward dispensations.

There-

Therefore finding all his intreaties rejected, and his plea's for his own defence slighted ; he is at length forced to beg their silence, desiring far rather to plead his cause with his Maker, who could discern his sincerity ; and therefore having ordered his cause, *ch. 13. 18.* and taken an exact and accurate examination of his former ways, he begins his pleadings for a mitigation of his present calamity, from *v. 23.* which he continues till interrupted by *Eliphaz, ch. 15.* and amongst the many arguments he urgeth, that taken from the determined days, and unpassable bounds prefixed to men is not the smallest : *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee ; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish as an hireling his day.*

These words being the ground of the following Discourse, it is but reasonable I should spend a little time in their explanation.

Seeing his days are determined, &c. The word which our Translators render *seeing*, is in the Original $\Xi\kappa\iota\varsigma$, which some Expositors think is used by way of query, thus, *If his days be determined?* But the Context seems to warrant our Vulgar Translation, and there is no doubt, but it is very emphatick, for it contains an implicit affirmation, a phrase very ordinary, when the thing for its certainty is confessed and acknowledged. But let us suppose, that the words should be rendred by way of query, yet there are two doubts that must be removed, else their quarrelling with our Translation is vain and impertinent. 1. It seems to be very evident, that it has then been a received opinion, that the days of

of men are determined; else *Job* had never made use of this argument, in his pleadings for a cessation from trouble. 2. If *Job* had indeed doubted, that mans days were *determined*, it was no wise nor rational plea, especially since he was pleading with God, who knew whether it were so or not; and since he might have made use of indubitable Topicks. But I pass by this debate as trivial.

His days, &c. It is debated by some, why *Job* makes use of the third person, and not of the first. The reason some give is this, because the third person used for the first, denotes contempt and modesty; and therefore *Job* in his low state is pleased thus to abase himself, especially since pleading with his Maker. But this conjecture is not fully satisfactory, for *Job* in several of his other pleas, makes use of the first person; which methinks he would not

have done, if he had made use of the third person upon the account of the former consideration; therefore from the promiscuous usurpation of the persons, we may easily conjecture, that when the argument he brings does in a more peculiar manner reach his own private condition, then he makes use of the first person: an instance of this we have *ch. 13. 23, 24. &c.* But now this argument taken from the determined days, and unpassable bounds set to men, is a general one, which all men as well as he might plead; therefore he speaketh in the third person, yet always eying his own condition. The like instance we find in the beginning of this Chapter, *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.* Here he speaks in the third person, and not in the first; for to be of *few days, and full of trouble*; is the character of every man.

Few and evil (says Jacob to Pharaoh) have the days of the years of my life been, Gen. 47. 9.

Are determined, &c. This word in the Original properly signifieth to dig, or cut thorow; here it is to be understood metaphorically; because God doth as exactly know the number of mens days, as if the most accurate search were made. 'Tis true, in all humane determinations, it is reasonable that consultation proceed. Some space must intervene betwixt their knowing of a thing and their determinations about it. I confess, it is disputed, whether the Humane Will be of it self a knowing faculty? or if it must follow in its choice the dictates of the intellect? I will not dispute this now; but there is truth in that general Maxim, *ignoti nulla cupido*. But to fancy that there is any such priority between the Divine knowledg and volition, is a gross mistake, irreconcilable with

the Infinite and Eternal perfections of God: who *uno actu & ictu*, (as they speak) comprehendeth and willeth all future Events.

The number of his Months are with thee, &c. This Phrase holds out these two things: *First*, the Exactness and Infiniteness of the Divine knowledg; and *Secondly* the Divine rule and dominion. *First*, it holds out the Divine knowledg to be Infinite and Exact, *The number of his months are with thee.* That is, thou art a God whose knowledg reacheth the smallest portion of our time, even to months and days; thou alone knowest all those circumstances; and to know the particular portion of days allowed to every man, does certainly require an infinite and exact knowledge. I will not curiously enquire, what truth there is in the pretended diabolical predictions of future Events; and whether Star-gazers from the Conjunctions,

junctions, and contrary Aspects Of Celestial Bodies, can foretell the future number of the days and months of terrestrial and inferior Sublunary beings: a passing view of this I will have occasion to take afterwards; at present we rest satisfied with this, that an exact and comprehensive knowledg of our days and months, is only the prerogative of him who holds our lives in being; the pretended knowledg any Creature boasteth of, is conjectural and uncertain, if not (as frequently it is) fictitious, unless when the Divine wisdom for some secret, and to us unknown ends, reveals to his creatures such future Events. But *Secondly*, the Phrase holds out the Divine Rule and Dominion, *The number of his months are with thee*: that is, they are in thy power, thou may'st either prolong or shorten the days of Men: and I think the meaning of this whole

verse is comprehended under these two heads, which I shall afterwards discourse of at more length.

Thou hast appointed his bounds, &c. It is not Fate or Fortune, but the wise God who appoints to every Man his time; now the bounds set to Men may be considered under a two-fold notion. *First*, As it signifies that common and ordinary Period which the God of Nature has settled, which Men by the common course of Nature may fulfill, if no accidental circumstance hinder: and it seems the Psalmist only understands this common term of Humane Life, *Psal. 90. 10. The days of our years are Threescore years and Ten, and if by reason of Strength they be fourscore; &c.* or *Secondly*, It may be understood in a more strict sense, as it is taken for the last moment of every individual and particular person; and of both these I shall more fully discourse
after-

afterwards and show, that the words seem to refer to the common term of Humane Life; or if they mean this particular term, in what sense they are to be understood *determined, appointed, &c.*

These and such like condescending Phrases, have been most unhappily used, and sadly misunderstood in the Schools. Some men no sooner read in Scripture of Gods determining or appointing, but they instantly conclude a physical previous necessitating act, which inevitably and irresistibly determines Men: and this kind of determination they plead for in all cases: so that Men even in their vicious actions are irresistibly determined to do so. I know no opinion which has rendered the reformed Church more odious than this: would to God I could say the Censure is causeless, and that I were forced to apologize, for saying our Divines have
erred

erred in this case. But alas the opinion is grown strong, and not long since it was not much less than Heresie to condemn it: and even to this day it is the study of some Teachers, to intill it into the hearts of their Hearers. For the correcting of this sovre opinion, I shall have occasion to add some things in this following discourse; now I shall desire it to be considered, that while we speak of the Divine determinations, appointment, &c. we speak of things our knowledg cannot reach, the best conceptions we can frame to our selves of the Divine volitions, are dangerous and imperfect; our capacities in this lapsed state are more narrow than we are aware of: and although they were raised to a higher pitch, yet we can never comprehend his way of working, who in all his ways is unsearchable. 'Tis truly sad to see the contending World so serious

ous and restless in digging those deeps that are unfathomable; it were to be wished that Men did not found their pretended knowledg of the Divine volitions, on the basis of their own silly volitions and did not argue from what we find in our selves to be the same in God. 'Tis true the Holy Spirit hath condescended to express things suitable to our Understanding and mean capacities, therefore we read in Scripture of the Divine determinations, appointments, &c. but yet to abuse such condescending expressions, and to imagine that there were really such purposes, and volitions in God as these we perceive in our selves: this were a hainous crime, pray let us satisfie our selves with this, that God in an eminent and transcending manner doth these things, which we cannot do without willing, decreeing, &c.

That he cannot pass, or as others render it, and he shall not pass, which Phrase is not to be understood, as if the particular Period of every Mans life were so fatally fixed that he can neither shorten nor prolong it, for this is contrary to many clear Texts of Scripture, as shall afterwards fully appear: but by this Phrase, we are to understand the common term of Humane Life, which is not so mutable as the particular, nor yet altogether so that it cannot be altered; for God has still reserved in his own power the shortening and prolonging of it. And further, we must not apprehend that the particular terms of Humane Beings is so mutable, that God knows them not, and cannot foretel the precise Period of every Mans Life, or that the Divine Counsel concerning things Future is mutable; no sure, God has declared the contrary. *I am God,*

God, and there is none like me, (saith the Almighty) declaring the End from the Beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done; saying, my Counsel must stand, and I will do all my pleasure, Isa. 46. 9. Two things there be which occasion men to change their purposes and resolutions. 1. Their want of Power to Execute them. 2. Their finite and shallow Knowledg, which cannot foresee those future circumstances which render their Designs ineffectual. But now there is no difficulty that can pose the Almighty; *with him all things are possible*, it is the Prophets argument, *the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, who shall disanull it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? Isa. 24. 17.* And further there is no circumstance or condition that lyes in the dark, and unseen to him, whose knowledg is infinite, and who equally com-

comprehends things past, present and to come. Therefore is it that men cannot pass these bounds prefixed by the Divine foreknowledge: But of this afterwards.

Turn from him, &c. It is queried whether *Job* here petitioneth a withdrawing of Gods supporting presence, and a cessation by death, or a cessation from the affliction and trouble he lay under. There be Three things that plead for the former Interpretation. 1. Because the word *בָּרַח* placed absolutely, signifieth to cease by death, 1 *Sam.* 2. 5. and they that were hungry ceased, i. e. died. 2. Because the supporting hand of Providence being removed, men return to the Dust. *Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled, thou takest away their Breath, they dye, and return to their Dust, Psal.* 104. 29. 3. It is not inconsistent with *Jobs* former desires, *Chap.* 3. and 6. *why died I not from*

from the Womb? why did I not give up the Ghost when I came out of the Belly? For now should I have lien [still] and been [quiet;] I should have [slept,] then had I been at [rest:] O that I might have my request, even that it would please God to destroy me!

That the Phrase can never admit the former gloss evidently appears from the words immediately following, for if Job had been pleading for death, why is that reason added, *that he might accomplish his day?* It is only then a cessation from his grievous affliction that he so earnestly intreateth; as if he had said, Lord, thy afflicting hand is heavy, and what am I but weak Dust, not able to bear thy heavy Chastisements? my Soul is overburdened with grief, and wilt thou set thy terrors before me to affright me? hath not poor man in this lapsed state, Troops of miseries attending him,

him, from which he may expect no freedom till Mortality be swallowed up in Life? And are not his few days labor and sorrow, pain and affliction? And wilt thou to those inseparable evils, superadd a burthen of pain more grievous and insufferable? O do not measure out so dismal a Condition to thy silly Creature! Make me not the object of thy direful vengeance, but in the midst of wrath remember Mercy. Art thou not Goodness it self, and far more compassionate than the most tender parent? And shall it be said thou hast measured out so acute torments to vex thy poor Creature? I confess Perfection is not the thing I plead; yet may not I say, it is not for my iniquity, nor for my sin, that thou hast afflicted me? And let this Consideration also prevail with thee, that my untender friends sadly mistake thy design in afflicting me; they conclude it

it is for some secret heinous crime, that thy judgements are upon me: O that thou wouldst turn from thy wrath, that I may enjoy some rest, before I go whence I shall not return?

This phrase *turn from him*, is sometimes taken in a very bad sense. Thus we find the wicked sadly characterized, as a people who desire God to depart from them; but as it is uttered by the people of God under the pressure of afflictions, it implies no more but a serious desire that God would be pleased to remove that burden. Now in such innocent petitions there appeareth no crime, for it is certain, that afflictions *simply* considered, are grievous even to the best of Mankind: *there is no affliction* (saith the Apostle) *for the present that is joyous but grievous.* 'Tis true impatience under affliction is an excess which no excuse whatsoever

ever can pardon: there are some persons of such hasty complexions, that they rise in passion against God if they meet with the least affliction; just like that wretched man who said, *this evil is of the Lord why should we wait any longer upon him?* But those petitions of the Faithful in holy writ, although at the first view they seem to be peremptory and absolute yet they are truly qualified and submissive; and at the most, only express the harmless resentments of innocent nature, that cannot but express how contrary afflictions are to it.

That he may rest; ut quiescat sc. paululum, that his affliction being removed he may yet enjoy a little space to solace himself, till he accomplish his day. I will purposefully decline the answer of that querie, Whether it is lawful to wish death when our condition is charged with a surplusage of calamity;

lamity ; for the brevity I design will not suffer me to survey the difficulties of that case, only in the general I shall add two things.

1. If the affliction be violent, fierce, and seemingly durable, rendering us incapable of exercising any duty ; I question not but common reason will suggest to every sober man, that in that case Death is more eligible than Life. Yet 2. since we are ignorant what God designs to us, by sending us such afflictions, it is our part to submit to the Lords will, and say, *Good is the will of the Lord.* Thus although we may comparatively and submissively wish Death upon the account of some acute trials, yet it is never lawful to be peremptory and absolute in such desires ; for frequently the happy event makes men conclude that *it was good for them they were afflicted.*

Rest, &c. Methinks the very sound of this word is full of ra-

vishing sweetness and pleasure, and yet to those who are stated in a condition of Woe and Misery, it is bitter and harsh; as the most ravishing and pleasant Musick is in the Ear of him who is sad: those who never tasted the honey-comb, know not its sweetness: the men who have been always drudges and slaves, have no discerning what Liberty is; and those who from their birth have been accustomed to pain, know not their misery so sensibly. But to have once enjoyed blessings, and on a sudden to be deprived of them, not only the unexpected change, but also their former happiness, adds to their misery, and makes their condition more unsufferable. If man had been created to toil and labor, *his eating of bread in the sweat of his face*, had been no curse: but to have been placed in a blessed and happy state, and by his folly to be hurled into a
state

state of misery and pain, that compleats his calamity, and makes him sensible, how miserable a thing it is to have been happy.

This single consideration seems to add very much to *Jobs* misery; his condition was once more than ordinary happy; and the amission of the comforts he formerly enjoyed, makes him pathetically cry out, *O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; but now (as he sadly complains) they that are younger than I, have me in derision.*

If *Job* in this state of woe had been perswaded of the certain change of his condition, and that his latter end should be more blessed than his beginning, the expected hopes of this had served to allay and mitigate his sorrow, and to render his case more sufferable and easie. It is the hops of rest, that puts strength in the wearied

traveller ; it was the expected reward and assurance of a future blessedness and better resurrection, which made those Worthies *Heb. 11.* so cheerfully undergo suffering. What the happiness of the Saints rest is, I am not able to represent, it being so far above any thing we can in this imperfect state conceive or imagine. The advantages that attend our present tranquility and rest, are many and great, which to enumerate would be prolix and tedious : but if from that, we should frame to our selves an *Idea* of that Celestial Rest, how imperfect would it be : any Rest we enjoy here, is uncertain : an unthought-of causality may impair it, but the Rest that remains for the people of God is everlasting, there is no fear of losing it : Heaven is a place free from trouble, and there is nothing that can imbitter that pleasant state.

Philosophers have a saying, *that the end of Motion is Rest*; this is indeed true of all those motions and trials the servants of God meet with; the way to the Kingdom is spread over with thistles; *thorow many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: but those Waves of affliction will quickly over; and when the day breaks, these shadows will flee away. This Winter will soon be past, and *the singing of the Birds will come*; and Christians, who by faith and patience continue in well-doing, shall ere be long be placed in those mansions of Rest, that are in *Emanuel's land*.

Alas, how insensible do we remain under the enjoyment of our outward comforts! when we are blessed with food, liberty, and health, we are but sensibly stupid and ignorant, what is the value of those mercies: but if hunger and

want begin to pinch us, if our former liberty be hedged in, if sickness and pain seize upon us, then we begin to gather some sense, and we accuse our selves for our ingratitude to God.

Till he shall accomplish as an Hireling his day: for the better understanding of this similitude, I shall in four particulars compare the days of man with the days of an Hireling, and in each of them make application to *Jobs* case. 1. The days of an Hireling, denotes a time, set, prefixed and limited for the performance of some particular piece of service; and are not the days of man also allotted him for to do his masters business? We were not born to be idle and negligent, sure God had some greater design in the Creation of man than this: now this particular quadrates very well with *Jobs* case, and seems to make the meaning of *Jobs* words
to

to run thus; Lord, thou hast given me a being, and appointed me a work to accomplish: but alas while I am thus excruciated with horror and pain, I am unfitted for thy service, the surplusage of misery measured out to me, disables me to go about thy work, be entreated therefore O merciful Father to turn from thy displeasure, remove the present heavy calamity I am overburdened with; that I may yet accomplish the remainder of my time in thy work and service. 2. This set and fixed day of the Hireling is full of pain, labour and toil; he is (poor wretch) both late and early at work, and seldom has he any intervalls of rest, unless his Master be more than ordinary gentle and benign; and when he is thus indulged a little ease, he must not with the sluggard say, *O si hoc esset laborare*, he must to his work again, for upon this depends his pay-

payment; no Wages is the result of not working; and in some cases stripes and whipping is the fruit of negligence. And what is Mans Life? At the best state it is but sorrow and trouble, till mortality be swallowed up in Life. Our pleasures (upon which we put the highest value) are either purchased, or accompanied with pain and labor. If we be in a prosperous state, our minds are either distracted with care to make it more prosperous; or with fears puzzled and perplexed, lest it be overclouded, and if we be in a low and adverse state, we grieve and repine; nay knowledg, the most excellent of earthly pleasures, is yet in the judgment of the wisest of men, but vexation of spirit; *For in much wisdom there is much Grief, and he that encreaseth Knowledg encreaseth Sorrow.* The life of Man is not unfitly compared to *Ezekiels Roll*, which was full

full of woes. If one misery or woe passeth, behold another cometh, as one Wave succeeds another. And by all these calamities we may learn what an evil Sin is, the fruit of which are all those calamities we meet with; *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy Bread till thou return unto the Ground.* And upon this account Job may be supposed to plead with God thus; Lord, is not my time at best but lamentable and miserable? And wilt thou superadd to this inevitable misery, a surplussage of pain and affliction? O deal kindly with thy Servant who is devoted to thy fear, *Turn from me that I may rest till I shall accomplish as an Hireling my day.* Thirdly, True it is that the Hirelings day is but Labor and Pain; yet the brevity and shortness thereof makes him regard it the less. It is but a day, and that will quickly be over and gone; and what

what is the Life of Man? It is but as a hand-bredth of a small extension; or like to a passing shadow, which we scarce sooner perceive than it vanisheth. *Man that is Born of a Woman is of few days, he cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down:* his decaying is within some few minutes of his budding; as the Poet speaketh of Roses, *& dum nascuntur consenuisse Rosas.* Now from this reason Job may be supposed to argue thus; Lord, thou knowest how frail and brittle I am, and if thou contend thus with me, how quickly shall I return to the Dust. I beseech thee consider that my time is however but short, and let thy goodness appear in removing thy stroke away from me, for I am consumed by the blow of thine hand; *O spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.* Fourthly, The Rest and Wages the Hireling expecteth, makes

makes the accomplishing of his day more easie and tolerable. The word rendred accomplish, signifieth to will and delight in a thing earnestly; *donec optata veniat dies.* 'Tis a day wished and longed for, and much delighted in when it comes. And indeed the strength of the comparison seems to lye in this, which makes the meaning of *Jobs* words to be this; Lord, now my trouble and pain excruciate and torments me, and my life is more wearisome to me than the Hirelings day can be to him; therefore turn away thy wrath from me, that in the finishing of my course I may be as jovial and cheerful, as the Hireling is when his day is accomplished: and thus I have done with the Explanation of these words.

The next thing I designed in this undertaking, is to enquire how the days of every Mans Life may be said to be determined; and whe-

whether the Period of every Mans Life were so fixed and bounded, that by his care, good managery, and use of the means, it cannot be extended ; nor shortned by his negligence, intemperance, or exposing of himself to Famine, Sword, or Plague, it is very certain from this plain Text of Scripture, that the days of every Mans Life are determined; but the manner how, is left unexplained : and this we do not learn from Scripture. And it were to be wished that our curiosity would forbear any enquiry into things that are hid : but alas our inclinations are so wicked and perverse, that *niti-mur in vetitum*, we are always bent and eager in our enquiries after things of a mysterious alloy ; and God knows how miserably some men have mistaken in their enquiries after a solution of the present doubt: and if I could promise to my self to rectifie those huge

huge mistakes some men have fallen into, this would be a sufficient justification of my present undertaking.

But in order to the unfolding of this doubt, I shall promise four things which will contribute to the better understanding of it.

First, There is no doubt that every Mans Life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*; this is a warfare from which there is no discharge: *what Man is he that liveth and shall not see Death?* As to this, the Prince and Peasant stand upon even terms, and as the wise man tells us, the rich and poor meet together: there is no justling in the Grave for precedency. I confess it were not worth the pains to consider the trivial instances, taken from the Translation of *Enoch* and *Elias*, to infringe this position. For first, we are not to debate what God may do, he has a Sovereignty over his

his Creatures, and must not be called to give a reason of his actions; all whose ways are tracts of wisdom and goodness. - *Secondly*, We know nothing of the manner of their Translation: he who will positively say, that they did not undergo that which is equivalent to death, will say more than he can prove. I am apt to believe that no sober man will say, that they entred their Heavenly Habitation with their unrefined bodies; no more than those who rise at the sound of the last Trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye, are carried into Heaven without any change.

Secondly, It is also unquestionable, that Sin introduced this Period to every Mans Life; the primitive threatning runs thus, *in the day thou eatest thou shalt dye.* And the Apostle hath as plainly exprest it as it can be, *wherefore as by one Man Sin entred into the world, and Death by Sin; and so*
 Death

Death passed upon all Men for that all have sinned, Rom. 4. 12. where it is plain, that Death is a punishment inflicted for Sin, so that if man had never sinned, we have no reason to think he should have died. I confess without Revelation, we could never have guessed this to be the cause of Death. The Heathen Philosophers were exceedingly confused in their notions concerning the origine of Sin, and the cause of Death: many of them thought that Death was a natural accident, originally appurtenant to Humane Nature. And indeed if Revelation had not declared the contrary, I had been fully satisfied, that Death had been no other thing but such a natural accident; but it is strange that any man that has conversed with sacred writ, should be of this opinion. And yet we find, the *Pelagians* of old were great sticklers for it: hence is it that the an-

cient Fathers and Councils have condemned it with a Curse. In the *Milevitan Council Can. 2.* we read thus *Placuit, ut quicumque dicit, Adam primum hominem mortalem factum, ita ut sive peccaret, sive non peccaret, moreretur in corpore, hoc est, de corpore exiret, non peccati merito sed necessitate nature, anathema sit.* In after-ages the *Scotists* (the most subtil of all Scholastick writers) inclined much to this opinion, against whom the *Thomists* (their irreconcilable Enemies) took up the cudgels: amongst modern writers the seemingly rational *Socinians*, have owned this groundless conceit. But I cannot stay to debate this at length, only in brief, if Death had been natural to man in the state of Innocency, it behoved to have been because of these following reasons.

1. Because *Adams* natural constitution implied mortality; the Materials of his constitution were
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not so amicable as to entertain a lasting amity and friendship. 2. It was the primitive precept, *be fruitful and multiply*; now it is plain that procreation includes mortality in its notion; and farther it seems to be unconceivable how this little Map of Earth should have contained a numerous multiplying and never-dying offspring. 3. Humane Nature in the state of Innocency did stand in need of Meat and Drink, as is plain from *Gen. 1. 19.* now the end of eating and drinking is not only to hold up, but to repair the decays of our Bodies, which would suddenly return to dust, if they were not thus renewed; and strengthened. 4. If Death were only the effect of Sin, and the Devil were called a Murderer from the beginning, because of his tempting our first parents to eat of the forbidden Fruit, it will follow, that since Christ came to take away the sins of the World,

and to destroy the works of the Devil, that he also took away the wages of sin, which is Death; than which nothing is more contrary to daily experience. 5. Immortality seems to be entailed only to the state of future Glory, *where Corruption shall put on Incorruption, and Mortality shall be swallowed up in life*: and then there shall be no more death, *Rev. 21. 4*. These are the most material reasons I can find for the proof of this opinion, in answer to which I shall desire the Five following considerations may be weighed.

Consid. 1. It is not to be doubted that the eternal wisdom, furnished our first parents with all these accomplishments their specifick nature could suffer: the signatures of Wisdom and Goodness were legible in the lowest and least regarded piece of the creation; but in Man in a more eminent manner conspicuous. It is almost impossi-
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ble for us in this fallen state, to conceive what those endowments were, with which his innocent condition was blessed; we have no reason to think that there was any jar or disagreement amongst his faculties, or opposition and fight of one quality with another. It was mans disobedience that disturbed the whole universe, and disordered every part of it; while he was at peace with his Maker, he enjoyed a serene condition, and needed not fear any hurt either External or Internal: then all the parts of his Body entertained a sweet harmony, and there could be nothing except Sin that should have made any failure in his constitution, or made a separation between his Soul and Body. But Sin having entered the World, every part of the universe changed its face, and Man who was Heavens favorite in his first mould, is now condemned to *eat his bread in the sweat of his*

face till he return unto the dust. This is all that we can learn from Revelation concerning the introduction of Death; to suppose any other account of it, were to give up our selves to the dictates of our extravagant fancies: and farther, it is very unreasonable to infer mans mortality from his constitution, and because he is earthly; unless we think it also rational, that perfected Bodies in the state of Glory are not Bodies, or that they are even there mortal; both which seem to be plainly opposit to Scripture.

Consid. 2. The Phrase Immortal, may fall under a double notion: for *First*, sometimes it is taken absolutely, implying a being most perfect, which had no beginning, and can have no end; and in this sense, Immortality is solely the prerogative of our Maker, and can never be attributed to any creature. *Secondly*, Sometimes it

is taken Conditionally: and so under various considerations it may be attributed either, *First*, To perfected Saints who are stated in Glory, where the primitive Image lost by mans fall, is renewed and perfected; and of those our Saviour in the Gospel of *Luke* tells us, *that they can dye no more, Luke 20. 36.* or *Secondly*, to our first parents in the State of Innocency. For so long as they remained obedient to the Laws of Heaven, Immortality was entailed upon their nature: for the tenor of the primitive threatning is, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt dye*: where temporal Death seems to be threatned, which had been idle and vain if men had died although they had never eaten the forbidden Fruit. I know some men think that Sin only laid a necessary obligation upon men to dye; and provoked God to remove that Supernatural and Superadded quality

lity and gift, which preserved them from Death. With such sort of men I have no great quarrel, although I think that God could as easily have made mans constitution so lasting, and the constituent parts of his fabrick so harmonious, so that he should have never dyed if he had not sinned; as to create a superadded being to preserve him safe. For reason would plead, that that superadded gift required another, and so *in infinitum*. But farther, 'tis very unreasonable to infer mans corruption from that precept, *be fruitful and multiply*; for although in some sense *generatio unius est alterius corruptio*, yet the state of being, even since the fall, (to which that axiom has only respect) is not so brittle, as that the production of the Child infers the destruction of the Parent.

Neither doth that curious query concerning the place for that supposed

posed numerous off-spring, carry with it more reason; for *First*, It is not to be doubted, but the Wise Creator who gave being to Man, knew well enough how to provide an Habitation for his off-spring. *Secondly*, the Precepts be *Fruitful and Multiply*, carries with it a Limitation; and *replenish the Earth*; so that we can never well conclude from it, that Generation should have continued after the replenishing of the Earth. But *Thirdly*, What suppose this little Map of Earth had not been able to contain so numerous an off-spring, could not God have Translated Man after he had lived some space upon the Earth to some better Habitation, as he did with *Enoch* and *Elijah*?

Consid. 3. Though Man in the state of Innocency stood in need of Meat and Drink, yet his nutriment was not noxious and hurtful to him, as now it is. It was
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for Mans disobedience that a Curse was upon the ground, before which there was no fear of hurt from the Fruit of the Trees, and the Herbs of the Field: (which were the only things granted to Men for Food in that state.) And indeed if we but consider that even in this fallen state, there is a huge difference between the Lives of those who live upon wholesome Food, and observe a moderate Diet; and of those who are careless in their Diet, and feed upon Husks; we cannot but think the former Consideration reasonable, especially since that blessed state excluded all manner of excess.

Consid. 4. Great and Manifold are the blessed benefits that are conferred upon Mankind, upon the account of his Redeemer: now Man, who was at odds with his Maker upon the account of his Rebellion, is again taken into favor; and the disobedient World

is reconciled unto God. And although the being of sin is not quite abolished, yet the Curse is removed; and Death is not properly now a punishment.

Consid. 5. Immortality conjoyned with a state of perfect felicity, is reserved for Heavens favourites: In the state of Innocency our first Parents were liable to Death if they rebelled, but the Saints above are confirmed in their Blessed state: and as our Lord Christ tells us, *they can dye no more.* But this much may suffice for the removing the former doubts.

The *Third* thing I premise is, that 'tis very usual in Scripture, as it is in all Languages, to put the Whole sometimes in the Part: thus Man is said to dye, to cease, to be Mortal, because the Body is liable to Corruption, and not that the whole Man, or all the Essential constituent parts cease. And thus when we dispute con-

concerning the Period of every Mans Life, we must not foolishly fancy that a Period is put to the being of the Soul; but only that its union with the body is dissolved: otherwise a dismal stroke would be given to our Religion; and what would become of the vertuous? I confess it is very hard and difficult to demonstrate the immortality of our Souls by natural reason: 'Tis true, by reason I may prove that our Natures are spiritual, and that we elicit acts which are beyond the power of matter; but yet we could never be fully ascertained that there is a Life after this; if Revelation had not plainly discovered it. The Heathen Philosophers very wisely entertained some hopes of a Life after this; upon moral arguments taken from the goodness of God, and his justice in distributing Rewards and Punishments: but alas how doubtful

full were their hopes, and with how much hesitation did they discourse of it! But by the help of Revelation, these doubts are fully removed, and we now know that there is a Resurrection from the dead, and that the Souls of Believers at death go immediately into glory.

Fourthly, Because the explication of terms is very necessary for the unfolding of doubts; I shall consider the twofold notion and acception, the Period of Humane Life is lyable to. 1. Sometimes it is taken in a large sense, for that common and ordinary Period which the Author of our natures hath settled, which Men by the common course of nature arrive at: Now many learned Men upon good grounds think that this is the determined bounds mentioned in Scripture. 2. Sometimes it is taken for the last moment of every Mans Life at whatever

ever time it happeneth ; whether
 1. In the Beginning of Mans
 days ; or 2. In the midst of his
 days ; thus the Psalmist prays,
*that God would not cut him off in
 the midst of his days.* or 3. When
 Men come to be of a good old Age
 and full of years, as it is said of *A-*
braham, he died in a good Old Age,
an Old Man and full of years, Gen.
 25. 8.

That there is such a common
 Period of Humane Life seems to
 be certain and indubitable: we
 evidently enough perceive that
 Men in the Age and place wherein
 we live, exceed not (unless rarely)
 the bounds fixed upon *Psal. 90. 10.*
The days of our years are Three-
score years and Ten, and if by rea-
son of more strength they be Four-
score years, &c. And if we shall
 descend to the Consideration of
 other Animals and Vegetables,
 we will find it true enough that
 the individuals of every specifick
 nature,

nature, have a common Period which doth not sensibly alter; but where there is a manifest difference of the climate, temperature, and soil. Again it is very unquestionable that this common Period hath not been equally extended in all Ages and places. 'Tis true for many hundred years by-past it hath suffered very little alteration, but sure from the beginning it was not so, nor can we upon any good ground be ascertained that it will continue the same that it is now, till the end of all flesh come. Though I will not positive affirm that Mens Lives will be insensibly shortened, till they become incapable for procreation.

But to determine what hath been the common Period of Humane Life in by past-ages of the World, is a *Theme* very difficult and hard: for 1. Although from *Abrahams* time till this present Age it hath altered but little or nothing,

as we may collect from *Gen.* 15. 13. and 16. where a generation is equalled to an Hundred years (as the Verses collated make it evident;) yet before the Flood and in some few Ages following it; this common Term was not concluded within the short bounds it is now; although then it was indeed exceedingly mutable. Before the fatal Flood we read not of any who lived not above seven Hundred years, (unless *Abel* who was murdered, and *Enoch* whom God took to himself;) nor of any who exceeded nine Hundred sixty and nine years. Now the common Period not being so denominated from some few particular instances, but from what happens to the most of Mankind in every Age who dye a natural death, we may suppose that Eight Hundred years was the common Period before the Flood. But then after the Flood, the mutability of this common

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mon Period is conspicuous ; for in the next age after the Flood, it was cut short two hundred years ; and in the next three succeeding generations it was abridged to four hundred years ; and in the three succeeding ages to the former it was reduced to two hundred years ; and in *Abrahams* time it seems not to have been extended to an hundred years.

In reducing the Life of Mankind into shorter bounds now than it was in the infancy of the World, the Divine wisdom and goodness do very plainly appear : for 1. Although it is true that Sin was the cause of Misery, yet it is manifest that as Men began to multiply, so they became more corrupted ; and as the Earth was replenished with Men, so with multiplied Miseries ; and those not only particular but common. War and bloodshed, slavery and toil, pains and diseases, were in the first ages of the World

very rare and singular ; now these are ordinary and common : and is it not then a great mercy that the days of our life are few, since so full of evils ? But 2. If Men lived as long now as in the first ages of the World, a Land would not be able to contain its inhabitants : and this is a far greater inconvenience and disadvantage, than the shortening the lease of our beings can be supposed to be. In the first ages of the World, the lives of Men were extended, that the earth might be replenished ; and it is very plain, that this common Period was shortened according as Man multiplied. I confess God threatens to destroy the inhabitants of a Land for their transgressions ; it was because Men had corrupted themselves, that God brought a Flood of waters upon the World : and yet the Divine Justice was accompanied with astonishing goodness ; for he did
not

not (as justly he might have) instantly cut off that perverse generation, but he gave them the space of an Hundred and Twenty years to repent. *Yet (saith God) his days shall be an Hundred and Twenty years, Gen. 6. 3.* That is, although this be a perverse and corrupt generation, yet because Man is but flesh, I will give him this time to repent of his wickedness; and if notwithstanding he will not after such warning mend his manners, I will destroy him. I know many learned Men think that God here only threatens to shorten the common Period of Mens lives, and that it should be contracted within the bounds of an Hundred and twenty years: but this exposition is not agreeable to the experiences of some ages next following the Flood, in which Men lived much longer than an Hundred and Twenty years.

But they say, God uses not to anticipate his time in bringing judgements upon a nation or people: to which I answer, it is very true; but methinks men have no ground to think, that in the present case God anticipates the time in bringing judgements upon them; for we cannot think that *Noah* was compleat five Hundred years old, when God threatned to destroy the World. And indeed any Man who is but a little acquainted with the Jewish custom of reckoning of years, knows how usual it is with them, to name the greater part of any thing for the whole. *St. Austin* is so clear in this, I'll rather set it down in his words than my own: *Intelligendum est hoc Deum dixisse, cum circa finem quingentorum annorum esset Noah. i. e. quadraginta octoginta vite annos ageret, quos more suo Scriptura quingentos vocat; nomine totius maximam partem plerumque*

signifi-

significans. Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 15. c. 24.

Thus much I have spoken of the common Period of Humane Life, in respect of the ages of the World. I shall now add a little concerning its changeableness, in respect of places: and I confess in this case it is so variable, that it is a hard matter to pitch upon particulars; only in the general it is certain, that this common Period is not the same in all places: in a temperat. climate this common term is extended; but where there is an excess of heat, or an unconstancy of the weather in those places this common Period is shortned.

But passing this I come now to consider the particular Period of every mans life: there be two ways it is commonly taken. 1. As it implies the disunion of the parts, by reason of the excess of some one quality or other: or 2.

as it implies the Period of Humane Life whatever way it is occasioned, without any relation either to the defect, or excess of any quality: and thus the learned *Episcopus* states the case in his first Epistle to *Jo. Beverovicus*. But to make this yet more plain, I shall consider that text, *1. Sam. 26. 10. As the Lord liveth the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to dye, or he shall descend into battel and perish.* Though David was anointed King, yet he durst not stretch forth his hand against the Lords anointed; neither would he permit *Abishai*, (who inconsiderately offered (to do it; knowing none could do so and be guiltless. Therefore he comforts and solaces himself with this consideration, that God should rid him of *Saul* one of these three ways: 1. By *smiting him* with some disease; and now to what a numberless number of diseases are our frail

frail natures incident: variety of maladies prey upon frail man, and millions of miseries attend him; *the Pestilence walketh at noon-day*, and the Air which he breaths may blow out the spark of his life. 2. Or his day will come; that is, or he will dye a natural Death; now *Saul* was well-stricken in years, and he knew that by the course of nature he could not live long. 3. Or he shall descend into battel and perish: That is, if some disease cut him not off, or if his day come not, yet he shall be exposed to a violent Death, or he shall descend into battel. Sometime a violent Death is purely casual, thus it was with *those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Si-loam fell*, *Luke 13. 4.* Sometimes it is only improperly casual, as when one of two equally exposed to danger is only killed: and sometimes it is only and properly violent, such was *Sauls* death, such was *Achitophels* and *Hamans*.

The way to this discourse in hand being thus far cleared, I shall now prosecute the design of it in this method. 1. I shall set down those erroneous opinions into which some men have unhappily fallen in their enquiry for satisfaction in the present case. 2. I shall lay down the two common opinions that offer fairest for solving this doubt. 3. I shall attempt a full and satisfactory answer: and lastly I shall conclude with some reflections upon the whole discourse.

I begin with the first to give an account of those erroneous sentiments some men have unhappily embraced in their enquiry for satisfaction in this matter. And that I may shun tediousness, I shall reduce them to the two following heads. 1. Some have foolishly imagined that the Period of Humane Life is fatal and necessary. 2. Others upon the contrary ex-
tream

stream, have as groundlessly thought that it is altogether fortuitous and casual.

Amongst those who ascribe every thing to the dispensation of a sure and inevitable destiny, the *Stoicks* have been always reckoned the chiefest combatants. It is well known that those stupid and senseless Philosophers did teach, that all effects were necessarily produced by the natural order and *series* of causes, which were from the outgoings of Eternity inseparably chained together; so that neither Humane industry, nor the Divine power could alter what such a conjunction of causes was to produce.

That Humane Industry, care, and good menagery, cannot alter the decree of Fate, the *Stoick* moralist *Seneca* very fairly confesseth.

*Fatis agimur, cedite fatis :
Non sollicitæ possunt curæ
Mutare rati stamina fusi.*

Seneca in Oedip.

The same *Seneca* also affirms that the supreme being is so strictly tyed to the *Sempeternal series* and order of Causes, that he must follow, but cannot gain-say what is thus established. *Quicquid est quod nos sic vivere jussit, sic mori, eadem necessitate Deus alligat, irrevocabilis humana ac Divina pariter cursus ve-* hit. Sen. lib. de provid. 5.

There are two very dangerous Authors of great name and fame, who amongst many other bad opinions, have recalled this Stoical Dream, which was long since rejected, the one is the Famous Mr. *Hobs*; the other the subtil Author of that Book, entituled *Tractatus Theologico politico*: Both which I may perhaps have occasion

sion to examine more particularly.

But if all things were thus established by a fatal necessity, sound reason would suggest to sober Men, that it were a needless thing for the Sick to call for the Physicians aid. And indeed Cicero very ingeniously confesseth this: *Si fatum tibi est ex hoc morbo convalescere, sive tu medicum adhibueris, sive non adhibueris, convalesces. ----- Si fatum tibi est non convalescere, sive medicum adhibueris, sive non convalesces, & alterutrum fatum est, medicum ergo adhibere nihil valet.* Cic. lib. de fato. And although Seneca thinks he has fallen upon a very good answer, yet it is truly never a whit better. *Cum sanitas (inquit) videatur de fato debetur & medico, quia ad nos beneficium fati per hujus manus venit,* lib. 2. nat. cap. 35. By which means the Physician is as fatally determin'd to prescribe the Cure, as the Sick

Sick Mans recovery is Destinatted.

The Ages in which these Men lived being dark and blind, we ought as much to pity their case, as correct and reprehend them. It is our happiness that we are not left to the conduct of natural reason; and would God our thankful acknowledgments were answerable to the greatness of this Blessing. I shall not need to stand in rejecting this Dream, I think the hazards this speculation hath exposed some of its favorites to, will be forcible enough to affright others from embracing it. I remember I have read of some whom this conceit had so far distracted, that they did cast away their Swords and other weapons when their Enemies approached: Saying, If it be our Fate to dye, to keep our Weapons will never preserve us from Death. 'Tis also reported of the deluded *Mahometans*,

humetans, that in Battel they take courage from this, that they are no sooner Born, than Fate Seals upon their Foreheads, how long they shall Live, and what death they shall dye. Alas who would not pity Men thus infatuated and bewitched! Surely, as *St. Augustin* excellently speaks, *Si cor tuum non esset fatuum, non crederes fatum*, Tract. 37. in Joh.

Next the *Stoick* stand the Star-gazers and Astrologers, who attribute the shortness or extension of our Lives to the bad or benign Aspect and Conjunction of the Stars in the time of our Nativity. Now although I deny not that the Heavens have an influence upon inferior things, yet surely this secret and occult dominion Star-gazers plead for, is so manifestly cross to reason and dayly experiences, that no man in his wit will affirm it. The Prophet hath long since advised us, *not to be dismayed at the signs*

signs of Heaven; adding, the *Heathens* they are dismayed at them, *Fer.* 10. 2. As if it had been only peculiar to the Heathen part of the World, who were ignorant of Gods Providence, to believe the vain predictions of Astrologers. *Babylon* was upbraided for her trusting Astrologers, Star-gazers, and monthly Prognosticators. *Isa.* 47. 13. These Men confidently presumed to foretell the time of Mens Death, and the easily deceived multitude gave a ready assent to whatever they spake: So easily a matter it is to impose any thing upon the belief of the vulgar. The *Palma-ster* as foolishly pretendeth, that God hath sealed upon every Mans Hand how long he shall live, and that observing men (as they would have us believe they are) can understand this by the lines and draughts in the palm of the hand. And or proof of this they aledg. *Job* 37. 7. Where
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it is said, *he sealeth up the hand of every Man, that all Men may know his work.* But from this place no such thing can be collected: for *Elihu* is there taken up in expressing the greatness of Gods works, and the Divine power in commanding the Snow and the Rain, small and great, to be on the Earth; and he addeth, *he sealeth up the hand of every Man.* That is, when Snow and Rain are upon the Earth, Men cannot labor and toil; their hand is sealed up, they cannot work.

Epicurus and his followers could never be reconciled to this opinion, but yet the account they give of this matter is every whit as extravagant and irrational: they being equally unhappy in the account they give of the beginning and Period of Beings.

The account these Men give of the original of Beings is so incredible, that no rational Man can have
any

any temptation to believe it; but this belongs not to the present discourse. I shall therefore only consider what they say of the Period of Beings; and briefly their opinion is, that it is no more but the casual and fortuitous separation of those particles of Matter that were united by a happy chance and hit.

This error is of an Old Date, and had long ere now past prescription, if it had not been so suitable to the humors of bad Men. The *Saducees*, whose Religion it was to contradict the *Pharisees*, were very great sticklers for this Dream: Some Men have confined the Divine providence to the Stars, and plucked out sublunary Beings from his immediate Rule and Dominion. *Cicero* could not be perswaded that God had any knowledg of things contingently future. Some to mend the matter, confess God may know the

general kinds of things, but they will not allow that he knows every particular. For this they think is inconsistent with the immutability of the Deity : But others have been more illiberal in their concessions, thinking it enough if they grant that God hath a care of Mankind, although he never regard lesser matters : and that,

*Curat magna Deus, fortune parva
relinquit.*

By means of these wild conceits this Error has proceeded from bad to worse, yet very few of the old Philosophers, or any other rank of men ; (Atheists those Anomalous births excepted) had ever that confidence in impiety, to say with the *Epicureans*, that the World is perfectly left to its own fortuitous and casual resolutions, or that I may express it in their Poets own phrase.

*Sive nihil positum est, sed fors incerta vagatur,
Fertque refertque vices, & habent mortalia casum.*

That the Period of every mans life is not so casual and fortuitous as these men imagine, may be made evident by clear testimonies from Scripture concerning the particular Providence whereby God takes care of every particular thing in the World. But because I will have occasion to consider this afterwards, I shall now add only an instance or two from Scripture, whereby it may appear that the most seemingly casual Periods of men are ordered by an infinite Wisdom, and fall under the Divine Rule and Dominion. And first the man-slayer, who killeth his Neighbor unawars, seems to be as casual a business as can be: and yet we may read how far
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the Divine providence is concerned in this particular, *Exod. 21. 13*. But farther, one of *Epicurus* Disciples would readily conclude that *Ahabs* death was a piece of chance, and governed by no Supreme power. It was but an Archer's drawing his Bow at a venture, which by chance killed *Ahab*. But the word of truth informs us, that by this means the prophecy *1 Kings, 21. 19*. was fulfilled: and that it came not to pass without the Divine providence, who rules among the children of Men.

And now I have done with the two erroneous extreams which some men have inconsiderately run to for shelter: the next thing I premised was to lay down the two common opinions that offer fair for removing the difficulty; but I must say (for the thing is palpable,) that I am now only to give the two former rejected opinions of the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*

dressed up in better apparel, and much refined from the impure dregs of Heathenism: as,

1. Some run to the absolute and inconditionate Decrees of God, and tell us, that from the out-goings of Eternity, previous to the Divine consideration of circumstances in which men are to be placed, God has so absolutely determined the Period of every mans life, that it can neither be lengthned nor extended by care and diligence; nor shortned by intemperance, Sword or Plague.

2. Others who see the inconveniences and absurdities that follow upon the granting that opinion to be true, are induced to believe that the Period of every mans life is ordinarily mutable; and may be both extended and shortned: yet still they grant that God may, as it seems good to him, either extend or shorten it.

There are four very considerable particulars that seem to strengthen the first opinion. *First*, There are many plain places of Scripture that conclude the days of every man to be bounded by the Divine determination. *Secondly*, There are many examples in Scripture which shew that the Period of every Mans Life is from the out-goings of Eternity, set and bounded in by the Divine will. *Thirdly*, It is a common opinion that the futuration of all things depends upon the Divine will, antecedently to which, things are only possible: and therefore, *Fourthly*, we can never give a rational and satisfying account, how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the *Basis* of the sure absolute Decree.

Upon the other hand those who plead for the mutability of the

Period of every Mans Life, endeavor to remove the fore-named doubt, and to shew the great inconveniences it is lyable to: That it quite evacuates the use of the means, and encourages men to expose themselves to any danger; &c. as I shall endeavor to make appear afterwards.

And now I come to the chief thing I aimed at in this undertaking. *viz.* To attempt a satisfying answer of the present doubt, in the prosecution of which intendment I shall observe this Method. *First*, I shall endeavor to shew how the Period of every Mans Life may be said to be determined. *Secondly*, I shall shew in what sense it is not determined: and *Thirdly*, how it is mutable and may be extended or shortened. I begin with the first, how the Period of every Mans Life may be said to be determined: and I shall endeavor to do this in the two following particulars.

1. The Period of every mans Life is so far determined that it is not without a Period. To determine, signifieth properly to set bounds or limits to any thing. Now since *it is appointed for all men once to dye*, every mans life is enclosed and bounded within a certain number of years. And I must add, that if I be not very much mistaken, this is the genuin sense of the most, if not of all, those places of Scripture that express the determination of Mans days: and indeed *Jobs words seeing his days are determined, &c.* seem to mean no other thing but this; and in this sense it is unquestionable that God has *appointed our bounds which we cannot pass.*

But 2. the Period of every particular Mans Life is determined in respect of the Divine prescience. Now because this is a very considerable particular, and, as I told in the explaining of the text, that

which was intended by Job when he says, *the number of his months is with thee*; I shall therefore endeavor to make out this truth by the plainest and most convincing evidence that can be.

In order to this I shall shew that God hath a perfect comprehension of all things, past, present, or to come; and by consequence fore-knows the Period of every Mans Life. *Secondly*, I shall prove this by plain evidence from Scriptural Examples. *Thirdly*, I shall make it appear, that it is solely the prerogative of our Maker to know the Period of every Mans Life. And *lastly*, I shall answer the most Material objections and doubts that are brought against it. *First*, that God hath a perfect comprehension of all things past, present, and to come, is so reasonable a principle of natural Religion, that it hath been generally owned

ownen by the wisest and most learned Heathen. And those impious wretches who at every turn take the name of God in vain, in attesting him in the truth of what sometimes themselves know is false, sufficiently imply that they believe Gods Infinite knowledg. Besides the truth of this is plainly held out in Scripture; it was to this City of refuge *Peter* did flee when his love was seemingly called in question; *Lord* (says he) *Thou knowest all things, John 21. 16.* And the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* makes use of this Topick to induce us to circumspection, *all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb. 4. 13.* And God himself appeals to the infinity of his knowledg in the demonstration of his Deity, and challengeth the Idol-Gods to produce their cause; and shew what shall happen that the latter end of things may

may be known, *Isa.* 41. 21. 22.

The Psalmist upbraids the Idol-Gods, in that they have eyes and see not: but he always comforts himself with this consideration, that the God in whom he trusts does behold his condition; all which instances make it undoubtable that God hath an infinite cognizance, and that nothing can be hid from his eyes, who equally beholds things past, present, and to come.

Now if it be so plain and evident that God hath such an Infinite knowledg, no Man can reasonably doubt that God knows the Period of every Mans Life; but if any shall ask how is it that God knows certainly the Period of Humane Life, I answer, that it is a very bold and fruitless enquiry, which concerns not us to know; his understanding is infinite, and shall silly Man think to comprehend and measure it by his finite know-

knowledg? The Psalmist modestly acknowledgeth that *such knowledg is too wonderful for him, it is high* (says he) *I cannot attain unto it, Psal. 139. 6.* And elsewhere he tells us, it is only bold Atheists who ask, *How doth God know, and is there knowledg in the most high?*

I confess the Schoolmen (as they are called) weary themselves with such vain Disputes, and they are as peremptory in determining the manner of Gods knowledg of future things, as if they had proved their assertions with Mathematical demonstrations. Some of them tell us, that things future are really present with God in Eternity; which methinks is a very noble Paradox. Others run to the Divine decree, and make it the *Basis* of the Divine knowledg. Others tell us that God in contemplating his own essence sees all the representations and *Ideas* of future things;
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and therefore knows them certainly. We might add many other conjectures, but these may let us know how vainly curious such wits are: but that which may satisfy any sober enquirer is this, that God is Infinite in knowledg, and therefore knows certainly the Period of every Mans Life, it being truly future.

The Second thing I premised was to prove that God knows the Period of Humane Life by examples from Scripture. Now I think this will need but little proof, since the predictions concerning the Period of persons are so many and plain; so many Hundred years foretold, and so punctually fulfilled without a failure in a title. The death of *Eli's* Two Sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas* was foretold, *1 Sam. 2. 24.* And punctually fulfilled, as we may read, *chap. 4. 11.* both the manner and place of *Jezebels* death was foretold, *and the Dogs shall eat Jezebel*

Jezebel in the Portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her, 2 King 9. 10. Which prediction was fulfilled without a failure in any circumstances, as we read in the close of that Chapter. But the most remarkable instances are those manifold predictions concerning the death of Holy Jesus. *All the Prophets* (as the Apostle observeth *Act. 3.*) *have foretold that Christ should suffer*; they have condescended upon the manner of his suffering, upon the time, and upon the circumstances relating to it. The Psalmist in a figurative Speech, (a very usual way of expressing things amongst the Prophets) speaks of his being pierced: so doth the Prophet *Zachariah*, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, *Zech. 12. 10.* *Daniel* did punctually speak of the time. *And after Threescore and Two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself, Dan. 9. 26.*

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But farther God doth not only know the actual, but also the possible bounds of every Mans Life; that is, God doth know that a Period should have been put to the days of many Men, if they had not by their hearty repentance and Devout Prayers prevented its lash. It was King *Hezekiah's* Prayer to God that extended his Life Fifteen years, for the message which God did send to *Hezekiah* was this; *Set thine House in order, for thou shalt dye and not live.* But he having prayed to God gets this return; *I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years, Isa. 38. 5.* From which it is plain, that God knew that a Period should have been then put to his days, if his Prayer had not prevented it. It was the people of *Ninevehs* repentance that prevented the threatned judgment that should have put a Period

od to their lives. Which Method if the old World had observed, they had prevented that Fatal Flood in which they were drowned.

Thirdly, That it is only the prerogative of God Almighty to know the Period of every Mans Life will be easily granted. For those who deny Gods universal cognizance, will never attribute it to any creature: and those who do acknowledg the infinity of the Divine knowledg, will never say it belongs to the creature. The only thing that we are to consider are these pretensions to a fore-knowledg of things which the Heathen world bragged of, but this Plea is easily removed. For 1. in those dark ages of the World it was an easie thing to impose upon the faith of the vulgar, who in all ages have been very credulous and apt to be thus deceived. *Secondly*, It is well known that there
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pretended predictions were very *enigmatical* and dubious. *Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere posse*, was a Problem, rather than a Prophecy, which might have concluded both ways. *Thirdly*, The most part of their pretended predictions were only guesses and conjectures, which for the most part were false and groundless; yet *Fourthly*, I do not deny but God may for ends known to himself reveal the Period of particular persons, when, and to whom he thinks fit. It is therefore singly the property of God Almighty who grasps all times, and who can never be impeached for giving a wrong divination, to know the Period of every Mans Life.

In the last place I come to consider those Material doubts and objections this principle may be urged with. As 1. It is hardly credible that God doth certainly know the Period of Humane Life,
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it being only contingently future: this objection *Cicero* could not answer, therefore being persuaded that some things were contingently future, he thought God could not know such things. But the difficulty is not so great as to make us deny God hath perfect knowledg of things contingently future. For 1. The light of nature may teach us that we must not reject what is plain, because we cannot comprehend what is obscure. That there is in man a rational Soul is beyond doubt; and yet how irreconcilable are the opinions of learned men about its original, whether it be by seminal production, or by immediate creation. Again the union of Soul and Body is a very mysterious riddle, and the most ingenious *hypothesis* has been confessed to be unsatisfactory; and yet no man was ever so far infatuated as to deny that in man there is a Soul and

Body. In like manner, what altho Humane Reason cannot reconcile the Divine knowledg with the contingency of actions? yet may it not rest satisfied with this, that God knows all contingencies because his understanding is infinite. And indeed the predictions in Scripture are so remarkable and plain evidences that God knows all things, that now it cannot be reasonably questioned. But suppose Revelation had taught us nothing of this, yet we might by natural principles know that God is the most perfect being that can be imagined, and therefore of Infinite comprehension; that he is our Maker, and therefore must know all the intrigues of his creatures.

But *secondly*, the Divine fore-knowledg is not the cause of things (for otherwise criminal actions which do not escape his eye, should be caused by him who cannot tempt any man to sin) which
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is impossible : if God should reveal to me that *Titius* were certainly to do such a thing the next day, my foreknowledg does not necessitate *Titius* to do that act : so that upon the one hand as the foreknowledg of it hath no influence upon the manner of its production, nor crosseth the Humane liberty ; for the Divine foreknowledg is not the cause why things exist, but it supposeth the existence of things : so upon the other hand the contingency of the Period of Humane Life does not infer, that it cannot be certainly known by an infinite understanding who grasps all things and seasons.

But the great difficulty is, how the Divine foreknowledg can be reconciled with the Divine promises, commands, comminations and prohibitions : how it can consist with the Divine wisdom and Goodness, to threaten men with shortness of life if they con-

tinue wicked and rebellious; and to promise length of days if men will obey his commandments, while-as he well knows that the wicked man will continue in his wickedness, and be filthy still, and that the vertuous and good man will persevere in well doing.

I confess, this is a very great difficulty, and hath induced many learned men to doubt if God knows things contingently future, not that they would impeach any of the Divine perfections, or derogate from the infinity of his knowledg; but only they think that the nature of things contingently future, is such that they cannot be known; as it is no diminution from Omnipotency, to say things impossible, or which imply a contradiction, fall not under its object.

But yet since Scripture hath so clearly revealed to us the Divine foreknowledg of future actions, methinks he is very rash and in-
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considerate that doubts it: it is a remarkable sentence of *Tertullian's*, *Præscientia Dei tantos habet testes, quantos fecit prophetas*. Hence the learned *Episcopus* tells us, that his Religion and the reverence he had to the Divine Majesty would never suffer him to admit this argument, which reflected so much upon the truth of Divine Predictions.

But I answer more particularly, that Gods promises and threatenings are serious, because although God knows that some men who are threatned will continue in their wickedness, yet it being in their power to turn from their Sins, and the Divine threatenng being an argument which should prevail upon men; no man can doubt but God is serious with sinners in such cases. If a parent did certainly know that his Son were to commit a criminal act, would any man think that that Parents threatenng of

his Son, if he did commit that act, were void of sincerity. But 2. As God knows that some wicked men, notwithstanding of the severest threatning, will continue in their sins: yet 1. He knows that even such obdurate persons may do otherwise, and 2. He knows that many men would have continued in their sins, if they had not been threatned with punishments. We have no reason to think that the people of *Ninevie* would have turned unto God if they had never been threatned. Now though God knew that *Ninevie* when threatned would repent, yet since he also knew that if they had not been threatned they should have continued in their wickedness; therefore no man can question the seriousness of the Divine threatnings.

And thus I have dispatched the first particular, how the Period of every Mans Life may be said to be determined. I come in the next place

place to enquire in what sense it is not determined. Now because I have already rejected the *Stoical* Fate, all that I shall speak concerning this head may be comprehended in these following particulars: *viz.*

The Period of every Mans Life is not fatally limited and bounded by any absolute or incondionate decree of God Almighty. Now because many learned men violently urge, that God hath from the outgoings of Eternity absolutely decreed the bounds of every Mans Life, without any consideration of those circumstances in which they are to be placed; so that men, do what they please, can neither extend nor shorten the lease of their life: I shall therefore endeavor to make this assertion plain, and remove those objections that it may seem lyable to; and the rather, because in such kind of assertions as are besides the common opinion, men will be ready to suspect some sinisturous design. That

That the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatally determined by any secret unconditional decree, will appear from the arguments we shall make use of in proving the inability of the Period of every Mans Life. Now I shall only consider those absurdities and inconveniencies that follow upon the admission of the contrary opinion. As *first*, if the Period of Humane Life were Fatally determined, then those wretched miscreants who with their own hands put a Period to their Lives, may easily excuse themselves before their Judg: for since it is supposed that they are physically predetermined to do so, how can it be imagined that they could do otherwise? is there any resisting of the Divine decree? alas, it was not in their power to help it, and how then can they be condemned for it. It is a known Maxim, *Nemo peccat in eo quod vitare non potest*:

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The necessity they are placed in, seems to excuse their sin, but if notwithstanding we shall suppose that such brutish actions are really criminal, we run our selves upon another absurdity, and that is, we reflect upon the Divine holiness and goodness; for if God has truly determined those brutish actions by a previous, secret, and unalterable decree, if he hath before irrevocably determined, and so intangled in such a train of causes as should necessarily make them offer violence to themselves; how can we vindicate the Divine Sanctity from the blot of being the Author of sin? Alas, dayly experience shews us, how apt Men are to make use of this argument for their own vindication, when they do what is criminal; they tell us they were fatally determined by an external power in acting them. And with this consideration they solace themselves, as if they were as innocent as Fools or Mad-Men. But

But let no Man deceive himself in arguing so foolishly, the Apostle *St. James*, very forcibly rejects this opinion. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed, Jam. 2. 13, 14.* The wise Man in his sense, after the certainty of things, concludes his Seventh Chapter of the Book of *Ecclesiastes* thus, *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: But they have sought out many inventions.* Pray then let us reject every opinion that teacheth God does necessitate Men to sin, for nothing can be more injurious to God than this. To think to palliat the business by saying God is under no Law, is but a Lawless and unreasonable pretext; for the everlasting rectitude of his spotless nature,

is more than any external Law: and pray, what can truth and Justice do, but what is holy and just? The distinction between the act and the pravity of the act, the former of which God determines Man to; but not to the latter, is as vain and frivolous. For the pravity of every wicked act is inseparable from it. And farther, the Divine commands particularly prohibit the act, and I think upon no other ground, but because the formality of Sin consists in the act it self. It is indeed strange to consider those Platonick and imaginary notions some Men run to: But I think it needless to take a particular view of such Dreams.

But as this opinion sadly reflects upon the holiness of God, so it is highly inconsistent with the liberty of Mans Will in the choice of the means. That there is a free Principle in Man, is so plain, that he who denies this, must engage himself against

gainst Experience and Reason. There is no Man who does wickedly, but he perceives he may do otherwise: the sick man is not constrained to neglect the means for his recovery; neither is the Physician forced to prescribe this and no other remedy: Men act not as Machines, but they have a Free Principle, whereby they may chuse what they think is best and most convenient: It's true, the Will, since *Adam's* Fall, is corrupted, and most-ly enclined to that which is evil; but yet the Fall did not destroy Man's Freedom, it made no Physical change, only the Faculties of the Soul are morally vitiated and corrupted.

But if the Will. were Physically (as they speak) determined *ad unum*, it were unreasonable to think that the Sick person, who neglects the means, could do otherwise. And alas! doth not Experience convince us, that Men of this persuasion neglect

lect the use of lawful means which God hath appointed, only because they Dream that if God has decreed that they shall dye, then it is needless to use the means ; and if God has determined that they shall live, whether they use or neglect the means, they shall live.

But you'll say, God doth not only Decree the *End*, but also the *Means*. I answer, this Plea doth not a whit diminish or remove the difficulty, since they suppose that the Means are as absolutely decreed as the End : which quite destroys the liberty of Mans Will, and leaveth no place for any choice.

Thirdly, This opinion leaves no place for praise to the Learned Physitian, nor for dispraise to the unskilful Empyrick. First, The skilful Physitian can claim no praise ; for although it be granted that he hath wisely considered the condition of the Sick, and the nature of the Disease ; though he hath prescribed apt Reme-

Remedies, and in all things behaved well, yet since he did no other thing but what he was determined to do by an external force, who can think he merits any praise, if he could have done otherwise but would not, then he might in reason claim it; but the case according to the present *Hypothesis* is quite opposite. But, Secondly, neither can we in reason blame the unskilful *Quack-Doctor*, who neither knows the nature of the Disease, nor of those Medicines he prescribeth. Alas! poor man does no more than what he was forced to do, and he could not do otherwise; why then should he be blamed for any failure or mistake he commits.

Fourthly, The natural and genuine Consequence of this Doctrine, is, to make men like Fools or Mad-men, expose themselves to any danger: For instance, What need we be afraid to run upon any Precipice, if God hath determined the

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the period of every man's life, there is no fear to encounter with any seeming danger; men may safely enough leap into the fire, or cast themselves into the deep, for there is no fear that they shall be hurt or perish, unless the Almighty hath determined it; and if this be, they may perswade themselves they could not do otherwise, for the Decree is unalterable, and cannot be repealed.

Nor is this true only in Theory and Speculation, but it may appear to have such bad effects, by the sad experience of poor deluded Creatures. Alas! do we not hear the Vulgar frequently comfort any who are in trouble with this consideration, that God hath decreed it should be so, if these persons did only mean that God exerciseth a special Providence in the world, and ruleth among the Children of men, no body had ever blamed them: but this is not their meaning, for
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they plainly declare by such kind of speech, that all things come to pass fatally. I have heard some wretched Sinners, who had committed great and scandalous sins, excuse themselves, by saying, they were decreed to do so, and God's will must be accomplished.

It were very easie to multiply many Absurdities which flow from this Doctrine by a natural Consequence; but these few I have named may abundantly satisfy every considering man, and shew him how pernicious and dangerous it is; but before I conclude, I shall consider the four Arguments I mentioned before, which I said, seemed to strengthen and confirm this Opinion, as

First, *There are many places of Scripture which seem to conclude, That the Period of every Man's Life is determined.* I shall mention some of the most remarkable Texts of Scripture brought to defend this, as
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first, *Psal. 31. 15. My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of mine Enemies.* From hence some draw this unexpected Conclusion, That God hath absolutely decreed the Period of every Man's Life. Now I think no considering man should ever have guessed this to be the Psalmist's meaning; for the Text only holds out the Divine care and Providence, whereby he does superintend and continue every individual thing in the world in their Beings, and therefore is it that *David* makes his application to God; that he would deliver him from the hand of his Enemy; which methinks had been a needless Petition; if he had imagined that God had absolutely determined the period of his Life. Secondly, *Psal. 39. 5. Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* This place is strangely brought to confirm the former Opinion: For the

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Psalmist doth not desire the knowledge of the Period of his life; he does not ask when he shall die, only he begs the Divine aid and assistance, that he may wisely improve the short time he hath to live. I cannot stand to consider such Texts of Scripture as these, which are no ways acquainted with the Doctrine they are brought to defend. There is only one Text that seems to favor this Opinion, *viz.* Job 14. 5. *Seeing his Days are determined, the number of his Months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* But I have considered this all along in this Discourse. I confess, some in return to this say, that all *Job's* words are not approved of God, therefore it is hard to conclude any thing from them; but this is a very insufficient answer. That which satisfieth me is this, that *Job* here only says that our days are determined, but he speaks nothing how they are determined.

terminated; now in what sense the Period of every Man's life may be said to be determined, I have already considered.

Secondly, *There are many Examples in Scripture, which shew that the Period of every Man's Life is bounded and limited by an absolute Decree.* The most remarkable is, that *Act. 4. 28, Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done:* The Scribes and Pharisees frequently stirred up the multitude *to lay hands upon Christ*, but their endeavors were always to no purpose; and the account the Scripture gives for this, is, *because his hour was not come.* In return to this, I shall desire it may be considered, that when we say the Period of every Man's Life may be extended or shortned, the meaning is not, that it is impossible that it

can be otherwise: we never doubted but the great Governor of the World may make what reserved Cases he pleases from the ordinary course of things; and no wonder though the present Case, which is upon all accounts so extraordinary, be exempt from the general Rule; and for such exempt Cases, to which there ought to be allowance made, no reasonable man can think they do any prejudice to the thing I have been proving.

Thirdly, *It is a common opinion, that the futurition of things depend only upon the Divine will; antecedently to which things are only possible.* In answer to which, I easily grant, that there is nothing that comes to pass contrary to the Divine will; the most criminal actions are ordered by his Infinite Wisdom; and permitted to be. But yet we have no ground to think that he decrees every future action.

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Else it were hard to vindicate the holiness of God; upon which consideration many Learned Men have been induced to deny Gods immediate concurring with the Creature in all its operations; and yet we need not run our selves upon this Rock; for we may safely enough maintain that the Divine will is immediately efficacious; for God who created man with a freedom of will, designed that he should act without constraint, and the reason why man acts freely, is because God wills men to act so; which plainly discovers, that the most contingent actions depend immediately upon the Divine will.

Fourthly, *We can never give a rational nor satisfying account how the Divine knowledge concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the sure Basis of an absolute decree.* This objection I have partly removed already, while I shewed that

God knows whatsoever is true, because his cognifance is Infinite; wherefore it is unreasonable to think that God could not have a perfect comprehension of things; if he had not decreed them absolutely. Now to make this yet more plain, I shall prove by instances from Scripture, that God hath a certain knowledg of those things which he never decreed: as absolutely future. And *First*, It is a very remarkable instance which we have, *1. Sam. 23. 11, 12.* where *David* hearing that *Saul* was to come to *Keilah*, he earnestly beseecheth God to tell him, if the men of *Keilah* will deliver him and his men into the hand of *Saul*; and if *Saul* will come down. To both which he gets this answer, *That Saul will come down; and that the Keilites will deliver him up.* And yet the Event shews that none of those came to pass, because the fulfilling of both did depend upon *David's* stay-

staying in *Keilah*. And yet God certainly knew, that if *David* had not departed from *Keilah*, they should have delivered him into the hands of *Saul*. And farther it is very evident, that *David* was not inquiring what were the present propensities, and inclinations of the *Keilites*; but what should be the event of his staying, and accordingly he receives an answer from God. Another Instance we have *2 Kings*, 13. 19. where *Elisba* the Prophet is very wroth with *Joash* King of *Israel*, because he did not smite upon the ground five or six times; and the reason the Prophet adds, is, *for thou hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it*. Which makes it as evident as any thing can be, that God foreknew that *Joash* should have smitten *Syria* till he had consumed it, if he had smitten upon the ground five or six times. It were no difficult task to prove this by a multitude of instances from

Scripture, but I think I need add no more for the satisfaction of considering Men; and for others, a Million of demonstrations will be urged to no purpose. And thus I have done with the Second thing I proposed, that God hath not by any absolute or incondionate Decree fatally determined the Period of every Mans Life.

- I proceed to the Third thing proposed namely, whether the Period of every Mans Life be mutable. And before I prove it to be so, I must premise two cautions. *First*, when we say the Period of every Mans Life is mutable, we mean no more but that it may be shortned by our intemperance, or neglect of the means; and be extended by our good managery and religious manner of living. *Secondly*, When I say the Period of every Mans Life is moveable, the meaning is not that it is necessarily so, and that it cannot be otherwise; for this would

not be consistent with our dependent condition ; therefore there is allowance to be made to extraordinary cases. The acts of Divine providence in the government of Humane affairs, are sometimes extraordinary, and therefore it must be left to his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, to make what reserved cases he thinks fit from the general rule. Yet for ordinary the Period of Humane Life is mutable; and God doth not exclude the power of second causes in governing the World.

These things being premised, I doubt not but to offer such arguments for the proof of the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life, as shall be sufficient for the conviction of any man who is not blinded by prejudice, or prepossessed with some contrary notion. And

First, Upon the observance of the Divine laws, there are many promises in Scripture assuring us of
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length of days ; and on the other side, there are many threatnings of cutting short the days of the wicked. Thus God promises length of days to obedient Children. *Exod. 20. 12.*

Honor thy Father and Mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Deut. 4. 40. Thou shalt keep therefore his Statutes and his Commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee. And particularly the Lord

tells Solomon, *1 King. 3. 4. If thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my Statutes and my Commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.* The Psalmist en-

courageth men to consider the case of the poor upon this Motive. *Psal. 42. 1, 2. Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, &c.* And upon

this

this account the Wise-Man also perswadeth men to observe and keep Gods laws. *Prov. 3. 1, 2. My Son forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my Commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.*

How much the observance of the duties of Religion conduce to our health, is a thing daily experience attests; and therefore the Apostle very excellently exhorts *Timothy*, to exercise himself unto Godliness, for it is profitable unto all things, having promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come, *1 Tim. 4. 8.* Religion is as a bridle to keep men within due bounds in their eating and drinking; it forbids all manner of excess which impares our bodily health, and obliges men to make use of lawful means for their preservation and recovery. If we consult experience, we shall find these to be the men who for ordinary enjoy the longest lives: it
is

is true some good men may be naturally of a brittle constitution, and others God may remove for secret ends known to himself; yet for ordinary, the Godly man, whose natural temper is strong; hath the advantage of the wicked man; and certainly Religion in its due tendency prescribes the best rules for long life.

As Righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil (as the Wise-Man tells us) pursueth it to his own death, Prov. 11. 19. We have a large Catalogue of the Punishments inflicted for sin, Exod. 26. Where more particularly v. 16. the Lord threatens to appoint over those who obey not his Laws, terror, consumption, and the burning ague: and that Men may not foolishly think all these are but threatnings which God intends not to inflict upon poor Man, the Prophet Iſaiah tells us, if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword, for the Mouth

of

of the Lord hath spoken it. *Isa. i. 20.* And the wise-man concluds it as certain, *Prov. 10. 27.* *The years of the wicked shall be shortned:* and to conclude, the Psalmist also tells us, *bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. Psal. 55. 23.* which the Poet very well exprefeth.

*Ad Generum Cereris, sine cade ac
sanguine pauci,
Descendunt Reges, & sicca morte
Tyranni.*

And the truth of this may be evident likewise from common Experience, by which it will appear, that no men are so obnoxious to Diseases as the wicked, who spend their time *in chambering and wantonness, in riot and excess.* *who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath wounds without cause? they that tarry long at the wine, Prov. 23. 29, 30.* What the Wise-man says of one kind of Vice, may be said of all, *They lead down to the Chambers of death,*

death, Prov. 7. 27. But these things are so obvious, that I need not to enlarge upon them. I shall conclude this Argument with this consideration, that since God Almighty promises to extend and lengthen out, or prolong their life; who walk piously and observe his Statutes; and threatens to shorten the days of the wicked, who refuse to obey his Laws, it cannot be rationally imagined that the Period of every Man's Life is absolutely determined.

Another Argument to confirm our Assertion, may be taken from the pious and devout prayers of the righteous, and their turning from their sins by an hearty repentance; both which conduce to the lengthening out of their days. I put Repentance and Prayer together, because of their near affinity to one another. Now that both these may be the Moral Cause of extending our Lives, may appear to be true

true from common Experience, besides the many Assertions and Promises in Scripture to this purpose. First, The truth of this may be evident from Experience, by which it will appear, that if Men had hearkned to *Noah's* Doctrin, if they had repented of their wickedness within the space allowed to them, they had not perished in the Deluge of Water. Of repenting *Nineveh* we read, *That God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not, Jonah 3. 10.* It was *Hezekiah's* Prayers and Tears that prolonged his life. *Go* (saith the Lord to his Prophet *Isaiah*) *and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy Father, I have seen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years, Isa. 38. 5.* And if Prayer were of no force, to what purpose were men so earnest in their sickness, to beg the prayers

prayers of others on their behalf: I confess if the Period of every Mans Life were fatally determined, our Prayers should be very needless. For can we be so senseless as to imagine, that our Prayers can move God to change his unalterable Statutes and Decrees.

But besides common experience, the truth of this is likewise attested by plain evidences from Scripture. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a kingdom to plant it; If it do evil in my sight; that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them,* Jer. 18. 7, 8, 9, 10. Methinks this is so plain an evidence of the efficacy of repentance, that no reasonable

nable man can have any doubt concerning it. But alas, if God had from the outgoings of Eternity fatally determined the destruction of Nations and Kingdoms by an absolute and incondionate decree, Repentance could never alter the determination.

It is the Apostles advice *Jam. 5.*
14. Is any sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him. I know there are other means to be made use of in order to the procuring of health than repentance and prayer, and of these we shall speak anon: but yet this I think may be truly said, that sometimes, when all other remedies have been either ineffectual or not to be had, repentance and prayer have done the business, and compleated the cure. And surely these are duties profitable at all times.

I know the Church of *Rome* tell us many extravagant Stories of the
 I wonders

wonders and miracles that have been performed by the prayers of Holy Men: those I shall not now mention, only I shall say, that although it is not credible that the Prayers of Saints upon the Earth, do either mitigate and alleviate the pains of those that are in Hell; or free them from that miserable state, (as some men have confidently enough reported:) yet it is sufficiently credible that *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much*, Jam. 5. 16.

A *Third* Argument to prove that our lives may be extended or shortened, may be taken from the use of medicaments. Common reason will teach Men, that it is needless to prescribe any Medicine to those that are dead; and truly the case would be much alike, if the Period of every Mans Life were determined by an inconditionate Decree. For although men might then make use of medicaments, yet I think

think I may truly say that their operation should be very ineffectual. But that men may to good purpose employ the Physitian when they are sick, and expect by the blessing of God, benefit by the use of Medicaments applied by the art of Physick, no reasonable man can doubt.

That the lives of many have been lengthned and prolonged by the excellent remedies, applied by the expert and skilful Physitian, is a truth so obvious to common experience, that I need not enlarge upon it. And on the other side, how many have died before their time, only by their imploying ignorant Physitians! It is a famous instance that we have recorded of one *Manes*, the Father of the *Manichees*, who having returned into *Persia* at that time when the Kings Son lay sick of a dangerous disease, he amongst many other Physitians was present: all the others plainly declared that the disease was

dangerous; but *Manes*, who was only a pretended Physitian, confidently desired that they might be all removed, and he would take care of the Kings Son, and withal promised to restore him to health in a short space; but the event was quite contrary, for within a short time the Kings Son died; which did so provoke the King of *Persia*, that he instantly caused *Manes* to be put to a miserable Death. What mischief has been done by unskilful Physitians, too many sad examples do daily attest; but yet if the Period of every Mans Life were determin'd by an absolute and inconditionate decree, no man could blame the ignorant Physitian, nor needs any person be troubled if they neglect the means; for God had determined they should do so. which indeed makes *Marthas* speech to our Lord Christ to be ridiculous, *if thou hadst been here my Brother had not died.*

That

That *Naaman* the *Syrian* should wash himself in the River of *Jordan* seven times, and then be clean of his Leprosie, was indeed miraculous: But yet it is plain, that if he had not done so, his Leprosie had remained.

Whether that custom in the primitive Christian Church of anointing the sick with Oyl was miraculous, or not, I shall not dispute; but this is certain, that it was then a means used for the recovery of the Sick.

There is one objection which some men very impertinently urge against what I have been speaking, and that is, *Asa* his going to the Physicians, which the Scripture seems to disallow. To this I answer, that King *Asa* is not therefore reprehended, because he asked advice of the Physicians, but because he trusted only in them, and sought not the Lord: as it is very plain from 2 *Chron.* 16. 12. And sure no reasona-

ble man will have any doubt but this was a very culpable neglect in *Aſa*.

Fourthly, Nothing is more evident than that there are ſeveral things which have a Physical efficacy in the ſhortning of Mens lives; as all kinds of exceſs, namely immoderate eating and drinking; all inordinate paſſions of mind, &c. as alſo the bad and unwholeſome conſtitution of a Kingdom. And on the other ſide, there are many things which effectually conduce to the lengthning of our days; namely all kind of moderation and temperance; the whoſomneſs of the region wherein we live, and our good managery. What kind of perſons are thoſe who for ordinary live longeſt? are they not thoſe who carefully moderate their ſenſual appetites, and who govern their paſſions, and who live in the whoſomeſt places? We commonly ſay that Men who live in a Po-
pulous

pulous City are shorter lived than those who live in the Country. I have already shewed how some vices in their proper tendency shorten Mens Lives, and that in some Nations and Kingdoms men live much longer than in others: all which methinks plainly tells us the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatal but Mutable, according as men are careful or negligent of themselves.

I shall only add another considerable argument, and so draw this discourse to a conclusion. And that is, don't we evidently perceive that many men had lived longer if they had not wretchedly and unreasonably exposed themselves to danger; and is it not evident that many Millions who have died in battle would have had their days prolonged if they had never descended into battle? That God hath from the outgoings of Eternity by an absolute and inconditionate decree de-

terminated both the time and manner of every mans death, this is more than we can learn from Revelation ; and methinks it is very inconsistent and irreconcilable with those many plain texts that shew it is lawful in time of eminent danger to flee for our safety, in time of Famine, and when any egregious contagion, such as the Pestilence, spreadeth in any place. How many Hundreds prolonged their lives by their flight from battle? If *David* and his Men had remained in *Keilah* it is certain they should have been delivered up into the hands of *Saul*; and what the Event should have been we may easily conjecture, if God by a special providence had not interposed for their safety. But besides the many instances we might produce, we have a positive precept to flee from any eminent danger, *Mat. 10. 23. When they persecute you in this City flee into another.* Which plainly shews that
this

this is a lawful means of prolonging our lives in such cases. It is a notable instance we have, *Jer.* 27. 18. *Thus saith the Lord, behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death: he that abideth in this City shall dye by the Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Pestilence: but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.* Which place plainly shews, that God had not decreed the Period of their Lives by any inconditionate decree; for the means both of prolonging and of cutting short their Lives, are put in their choice. And this is all that I shall say to the *Third* thing I proposed to speak, concerning the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life for ordinary.

All that now remains is to conclude with some practical reflections upon what hath been said. And *first*, whatever debates there may

may be concerning the Period of every Mans Life, yet there is no doubt but Mans Life hath a Period.

It is appointed for all men once to dye, and from this warefare there is no discharge. Pray what is become of all those who lived in former ages? have they not gone the way of all living? and shall we think to shun the approach of this last Enemy, may not the multiplied experiences we have of other Mens frailty and mortality, convince us that we are brittle, and must return to the dust? we are of the like constitution that they were of, and we cannot expect to be otherwise dealt with. *What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?* and yet many men live as unconcerned as if they had the perpetuity of their beings ensured to them and had *concluded an agreement with Death,* and had *secret intelligence with the Grave.*

It is truly a business worthy to be regrated that men who are living,

ing, as it were in the House of mourning, daily visited with pains and diseases, and have no promise, at least, for one moments security, yet live unconcerned and never mind those pleasures. It was indeed a praise worthy and commendable custom amongst the *Jews*, to build their Sepulchers in their Gardens (as we may guess from *Job. 19. 41.*) that so in the midst of their pleasures, they might behold Monuments of their mortality.

Truly if we did frequently meditate upon our latter end, we should live more like Christians than we now do. The *end* hath a very great influence upon mens endeavors; hence is that general *Maxim*, *Finis ultimus præscribat regulas totius vite.* And it seems that the Psalmist upon this account prays, *Lord make me know mine end, and the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.* It is not to be doubted but

but we should order our conversation aright, If we had this consideration in our view. We should have but low and contemptible thoughts of the perishing pleasures which we now so much delight in. Then we should be argued out of our folly in spending our years as a tale that is told.

It is threatned a sad Plague to the oppressor, *that the number of his years are hidden from him,* Job. 15. 20. He is a person that never considers that his appointed time approacheth, and that God will bring him into the Grave, the place appointed for all living: and it is laid down as the cause why *Jerusalem came down wonderfully,* that *she remembered not her last end.* Lam. 1. 9. And truly it may be also reckoned as the cause why Christians live so contrary to the commendable rules of the Gospel they profess. If we did but entertain somewhat more familiar

familiar thoughts of our appointed time, we could not but rectify those abuses we are guilty of. But alas, all the passages of our time are filled up with cares about things that perish: we can walk to the Grave with our friends, whom we once loved as intirely, as our own lives, and reap as little advantage by their death as if we had never been acquainted with them, never remembering, *that we must go to them but they cannot return to us.*

But *Secondly*, although the Period of every Mans Life is fixed in respect of the Divine foreknowledge, yet to us it is uncertain; we know not when this Enemy may surprize us. Of this we may say what our Lord Christ saith of the day of judgment, *but of that day and hour we know not.* When we least suspect its approach it may call us to go hence and be no more. How many millions of strange and unexpected accidents attend us?

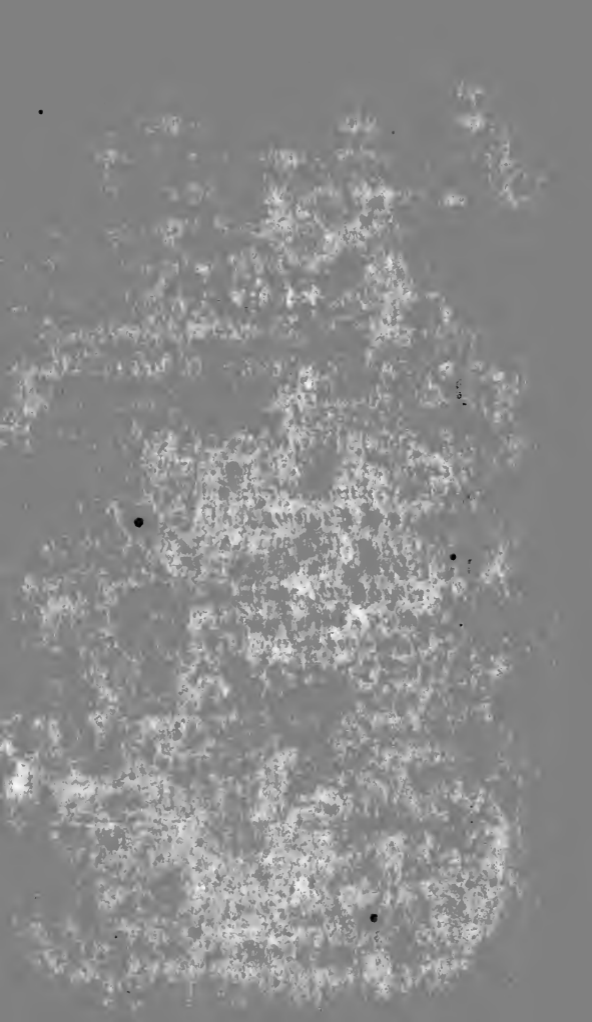
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the Pestilence walketh in darkness, and Destruction wasteth at noon-day, astonishing dispensations may allarm us by night, and the devouring Arrow fleeth by day, *Psal. 91, 5. 6.* When we go abroad, we cannot promise to our selves a safe return, and at home when we put off our cloths, we cannot tell if we shall ever put them on again: the Grave is always ready for us. What strange kind of unknown diseases doth our age produce, from which we cannot promise to our selves any exemption? We live amongst cruel and mad Men, and do we know but those Beasts of prey may devour us? When we look for peace, destruction may come. This was the Rich Mans Fate, who while he was promising himself rest for many days, *that same night his Soul was required of him.* We are always apt to put the thoughts of this day far from us; when
we

we enjoy health we never think of any change, and that sickness may seize upon us and put a Period to our lives. We live indeed at a great deal of uncertainty; *man also knoweth not his time, as the Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the snare: so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them,* Eccl. 9. 12. We look upon Death as the unfaithful Servant did upon his Masters coming, we think Death doth *delay its coming*; but if we were not fools we should always realize the quickness of its approach. Maybe we are young and strong, how many such have been called away in the morning of their age? *Go to now* (saith the Apostle James) *ye that say to day or to morrow we will go into such a City and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow,* Jam. 4. 13. 14. Alas
our

our days at best are but labor and sorrow, for they are soon cut off, and we flee away. When a few years are gone, Wee must go the way of all flesh : and yet upon the happy improvement of this depends our everlasting happiness or misery ; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledg, nor wisdom, in the Grave whither we are going,* Eccl. 9 10.

F I N I S.



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A
DEFENCE
AND
CONTINUATION
Of the Discourse concerning the
PERIOD
OF
HUMANE LIFE.

BEING
A Reply to a late Answer,
Entituled, *A Letter to*
a Gentleman, &c.

To which is added,

AN APPENDIX,

Wherein several Objections urged in
private, are considered, and Mr.
Gales severe, but groundless Charge
is Examined.

Richard Allestree.

LONDON,

Printed, and are to be sold by *Enoch Wyer,*
at the *White Hart* in *St. Pauls*
Church-Yard, 1678.

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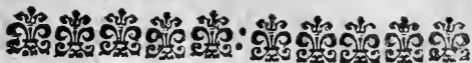
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T H E

PREFACE.

READER,

IF Custom had not made it common to prefix Epistles to Books, I had freely permitted thee to read the following Discourse without the trouble of a preliminary Salutation: but the truth is, I like not to be either Singular or Uncivil:

And yet, I confess I have but very little to acquaint thee with: for as I intend not to court your kind acceptance of the following Discourse, so
neither

The Preface.

neither do I designe to disparage it, or discourage thee from perusing it.

Only if I can prevail, I heartily wish thou wouldest read without prejudice, and with that Candor that becomes an impartial and discreet Reader: and then, either give, or deny it entertainment as you think fit; for I assure thee The Author desires to impose nothing upon thy faith, but what is able to abide the test. If he has erred, he is only ambitious to have no followers.

When I gave way to the publishing of the former Discourse, I expected not to have met with so many Enemies. But I see the old saying holds good, veritas

The Preface.

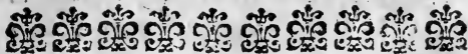
ritas odium parit. As for those severe censures some men have urged, I have endeavoured to remove them in the following Discourse, especially in the Appendix. For personal reflections (the only weapons others have made use of; although they be as Ignorant who I am, as I desire they should be,) these I may very rationally contemn, without the fear of censure from the strictest Zoilus.

I confess next to no adversary, a fair and ingenuous one is the most desirable; but whether it has been my Good fortune (or if you please to say Fate) to be blessed with such, after thou hast perused both what they and I say thou wilt be able to judge. And

The Preface.

And upon this account (though not only) I heartily wish thou wouldest be pleased to compare the Reply and Answer, and both with the First Discourse, which accidentally (I assure thee not designedly) gave birth to them ; in doing of which if thou reapest no advantage thy self, yet I am sure thou shalt oblige the Booksellers to give thee thanks.

FAREWEL.



A
D E F E N C E
O F T H E
B O O K,
E N T I T U L E D ;

*A Discourse concerning the Period
of H U M A N E L I F E.*

THere never was any
age in which the itch-
ing humour of writing
many Books was more
truly visible, than in the present:
we may now with the Poet re-
grate, that, *Scribimus indocti
doctique*, every man thinks him-
self fit enough to spin out, &

discourse for the Press; hence is it, that the World is even ready to complain of the Burden. I know it is usual to pretend the importunity of necessity, a very fair and specious pretext, but I much doubt, if it be always real and true.

BUT least I seem accessary to the fault I so much condemn, I here enter my solemn protest; that as it was no piece of vanity that engaged me to write the former discourse; so neither am I now acted by that principle to defend it: If it had been any unworthy motive that did first animate me, I should now have appeared in Sackcloth, with a free and ingenuous confession of the crime.

BUT having in the Preface to that discourse already satisfied the World concerning the design, both of the Author, and of the Book: I shall now forbear to give a more tedious account.

AND

AND because I promised if the judicious should dislike any thing in the Book, either to satisfie them, or yield to the force of their clearer discoveries: I am now come to tell them, that I will keep my promise; and stand to that engagement.

MUCH has been said in private Cabals against both Author and Book: that the Author is an *Arminian*, is but a modest censure, which I assure them does not in the least offend me. As for their more severe thundrings, in condemning the Book to the flames, and the Author to the Pillory; it is good their power is not able to effect what they please. I see if they cannot answer the Book, they are resolved to make both it and the Author odious enough. But all the slanders that malice can invent, shall never discourage me from defence of the Truth;

IF the great Captain of our Salvation was said to be a *Samaritan*, and to have a Devil: It is but a small matter that I should meet with disingenuous men, who yet brand me with more gentile crimes. If my own familiar friends should carry themselves demurely towards me, this is no harder measure than what better men than I have experienced. It is an old, but true saying, *Veritas odium parit*. The great Apostle of the Gentiles did find it so, *Am I become your Enemy because I tell you the truth?* And since this is also my lot, I shall bear those various censures very patiently, not intending to render reviling for reviling, but Blessing for Cursing: *Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

BUT that I may not be further tedious, I shall pass by all private censures, and now only consider an Answer, which was sent me
by

by the Gentleman who published my former Books, with the following Letter.

S I R,

BEing informed that there was an Answer to your late discourse concerning the Period of Humane Life, intended for the Press; I ceased not 'till I had spoke with the person that had it: And although I had but small acquaintance with him, yet his ingenuity was such, that I obtained a sight of it; but finding it so long that I could not then peruse it, I earnestly desired to know if he had the confidence to trust me with it; freely adding, that I knew how to communicate it to you (not telling who you were,) at first he seemed to refuse, but after I had shewed him the reasonableness of my desire, he condescended. Sir, The Answer is thought to be no ways despicable; therefore if your affairs of greater concern can

allow, I assure you your speedy answer to; and return of these Papers, will be very acceptable to;

S I R ,

Your obliged Servant.

I have here set down this Letter, that men may know by what means I obtained a sight of the answer before it was Printed.

The R E P L Y .

S I R ,

SOME few days ago I received yours, with the bundle of Paper. I heartily thank you for the pains you have taken in that particular. I have now perused those Papers, which I find are bespattered with very much Gall
and

and bitterness; it is a severe challenge, *that I have fallen upon very bad principles, and maintain a position contrary both to the Doctrin of our Church, and of all sober and Orthodox Divines.* If this were true as it is false, the Author might be excused for his over much zeal; but since the censure is altogether void of truth, he must pardon me to say, that the calumny is inexcusable: but I love not to fling Dirt upon those, who take the liberty to bespatter me with it; it were easie to recriminate, but our great Master never taught any such lesson.

BUT as I do not know of what Church the Author is a Member, (for it may be, I oppose, that Doctrin that is hotly taught in some particular Churches) so neither do I know what Divines may be Orthodox in his account: Sure I am, that both the best and most learned Writers of this and former

ages, have maintained the sentiments I have embraced.

WHETHER the Authors opinion or mine does best *agree with the humours of bad men*, needs but very little judgment to determine. Pray, how can it gratifie any wicked man to tell him, that he may prolong his days (a thing the most vitious and aptest to wish) if he would obey the Laws of Heaven? And upon the other hand, that his days shall be shortened (a heavy and unpleasant message to bad men, who have no other heaven but what they enjoy upon Earth) if he continues in his wickedness? Methinks this principle is so far from encouraging men to sin, that it quite opposeth it; affording men most excellent encouragements to promote piety, and to shun all manner of vices, *which lead down to the Chambers of Death.*

BUT if we now enquire how
the

the Doctrin of absolute and irresistible decrees do encourage men to be holy, we shall weary ourselves ere we find one reason to prove it. There can be no Doctrin more pleasing to bad men, for indeed hereby they labour to excuse themselves, telling us, that God has from Eternity absolutely determined every thing they should do, and therefore they cannot help it. O how luscious is the high relish of this Doctrin to bad men!

FROM all this it may appear, that the Gentleman might have very well spared that Pathetick Query. *Shall we let it abroad to infect men, without ever discovering the danger of it?* No sure Sir, that were a great fault; pray involve not yourself (by a sinful silence) in so much guilt: But alas! if I should put the Author to tell me wherein lies the danger, I could hazard ten to one that he should be puzzled to tell.

But

But this must pass for current Coin, and be as strongly believed, as if it were proved by ten thousand *Mathematical Demonstrations*; else we will be called credulous, and not having so much Faith, as a Grain of Mustard-Seed.

I CONFESS the Author pretends to be very unwilling, *to engage in the nice speculations of controversial Divinity*; but yet it seems he is of so good and condescending a nature, that he cannot resist the great importunity of a noble Friend; he will rather hazard one single look into *things that* (as he says) *are hid*, than disoblige his Friend, or (and indeed this is a strong reason) suffer the *good cause* to be ruined by his silence. And thus we see that by his gracious condescension, he luckily bestows a couple of favours, one upon his friend, and the other upon truth. Sure never was there
any

any man more fortunately happy ; but I forgot it was his fate to do so , and no thanks to him for all this.

THE Gentleman needed not, I think, have troubled himself much with the state of the controversie , since I had done it plainly enough ; and I leave you to guess if the Author has done it more clearly.

BUT passing lesser circumstances , I come now to examin the Arguments he brings , to prove , *that the Period of every man's life is unalterably fix'd by the Divine Decree* : this is the grand point he maintains ; a Doctrin long since introduced by the *Stoicks* , and of a later date , espoused by *Mahomet* and his followers.

AND yet if we will believe the Author , this Doctrin is every whit consonant to Scripture , and undoubtedly proved by reason : Well then , let us follow the Author

thor in his search, and see whether such an uncouth notion has a favourable aspect from either of the two.

AS for Scripture, 1. he tells us, *there are many plain Texts which do upon that account, express a kind of propriety, that men may claim in this last Period.* O wonderful subtle disputer! I know no man could argue so profoundly if not a Disciple of *Voetius*: but let us consider the Texts of Scripture he brings to prove this; the first is *Eccl. 9. 12. Man also knoweth not his time.* Now the Author makes this to be the import of the words: *The Period* (says he) *of man's life is fixed by one absolute Decree, and therefore he may call it* [his time.] This is indeed a very ingenious Comment, only it is faulty in that it is singular; for I dare promise, few men ever thought this was the meaning of the Text: If I had been in the
Pulpit

Pulpit I had readily raised this Doctrin ; *that the time of our Dying is very uncertain*, and I had proved it by *Solomon's words, man also knoweth not his time.* Another Text he brings, is *Psal. 39. 5. Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.* But I remember I have already shewed how strangely this Text is brought to confirm a Doctrin it is utterly unacquainted with ; see *The Period of Humane Life*, pag. 109. Edit. 1. by this brief reply the Author may easily guess what strength is in these or the like Phrases to confirm his opinion.

THE next argument he urgeth is every whit as impertinent ; for it is an old and true saying, *Omnis similitudo claudicat* : this the Author seems to smell ; but he pretends that he is so wise, as to press them no farther than the scope of the comparisons lead him ; but whether this be so or not, I shall briefly
 examin.

examin. First, *Scripture* (he says) frequently compares the life of man to the Grass; the flourishing and decaying of which, is fixed and determined.

Ans. It will trouble the Author to prove, that all Grass doth flourish in the Morning, and decays in the Evening. But I shall grant that there are some Flowers that do; yet this can never prove that the Period of Humane Life is fatally determined. If I remember well, Commentators say, such similitudes are made use of to denote the brevity of man's life. I shall instance but one sacred Text, to prove this is the import of the similitude; the place is *Job 14. 1, 2.* *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble, he cometh forth as a Flower, and is cut down. Secondly, He tells us, that the life of man is compared to a Race, Heb. 12. 1.*

Ans. It is so; and that very aptly;

aply; but not because the bounds are unalterably fixed, but because of the noble price that is appointed for those who obey the Divine Precepts, and who do not faint in well doing; and the only intent of the comparison is, that if we expect that Heavenly reward, we must persevere in well doing; as those who run in a Race do not faint and give over, if they expect to obtain the price. *Thirdly, The life of man* (says he) *is compared to a shadow.* *Ans.* I know it is, but sure not because it hath determined limits, but because of its duration; for as a shadow quickly passeth away, so the days of man are but few. Hence *Job* tells us, *He fleeth as a shadow. cap. 14. 2.* and the Psalmist speaking of himself says, *I am gone like a shadow when it declineth.* But I have insisted too long in answering such trivial arguments. I will now view if the plain (as he calls them,

them, implying that the former were not) Texts of Scripture he brings, be urged to any better purpose.

THE first plain Text is *Job 14. 5. Seeing his days are determined, &c.* this is indeed the most remarkable place of Scripture we have seemingly standing against us; but in my former discourse I have fully shewn, that it does no way contradict any position I defend. I shall therefore now only consider what he urges against what I there replied, and judge you which of us does succumb.

I cannot (says he) but admire the Author's impudence in making this Text the Basis of his discourse. Good Sir, is this the effect of a mild and gentle Spirit? but I'll pardon this, since may be it is the result of your holy zeal; but if you be not resolved to be an admirer, I will endeavour to
cure

cure that distemper. The reason then why I made choice of that Text was, because I judged it the main place urged in defence of the opinion you maintain; and if this were well cleared and duly explained, and made to make nothing for you, I easily foresaw how little difficulty there would be in answering other Texts.

LET us now view how artificially he draws *Job's* words in a Syllogystick fear, *If God* (says he) *has so determined man's days, that he cannot pass those prefixed bounds, then the Period of Humane Life is not mutable; but the first is unquestionable. Ergo. Answ.* If the Author had but remembered how he had stated the case, he had never made use of this argument; for he grants, that both he and I may maintain, that the Period of Humane Life is both mutable and immutable. I did not deny but our days are determined, see pag. 81.

and the Author must know, that all the debate is concerning the τὸ Διότι.

But (says the Author) *I am heartily glad that he acknowledgeth the infinity of the Divine knowledge. When I first did read this, I thought the Author had forgot himself, for he is but seldom in so good an humour; but when I again viewed what follows, I saw all was spoken Ironice; which will make me ever afterwards suspect his Complements: And if he kiss again, I shall be upon my Guard that he do not betray.*

HOW the Divine knowledge is not conjectural, although it be not founded on an absolute Decree, has been briefly manifested in the first Discourse. But because I must follow the Author, I shall forbear to speak of it here, because it comes afterwards to be considered.

A SECOND plain Text of Scripture is *Psal. 90. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return ye Children of men.* I am the most deceived, if this Text proves what it is brought for: Sure the only intent of the Royal Psalmist here is to shew, that God is the supream Lord and Master of the Universe; who exerciseth an uncontrollable Dominion, and who can according to his pleasure either shorten or prolong the days of man; but there is not one word here of any absolute Decree.

A THIRD plain Text equivalent to the former is *Psal. 68. 20. Unto God the Lord belong the passage to Death.* Now let us hear the Author's Comment, *that is* (says he) *the Period of every man's life is in the hand of God.* Now this is indeed very well said; but he sees better than his Neighbours, who says it is spoken to

the purpose. But further, what if he and *Voetius* have given a bad Translation of the Text, if I might hazard to our *English*, (which I think is one of the best Translations) I dare say it is so; for there we read, *Unto God the Lord belong the [issues from] Death.*

THE last plain Text is *Act. 17. 26.* *He hath determined the bounds of our Habitation.* Strange! the Author can never find the word *determine*, but he instantly concludes, that we are to understand an absolute and irrelative Decree. He knows well enough that I grant that the Period of Humane life is determined, why then does he urge these Texts against me?

IN the next place, the Author brings a great many instances to prove the Period of those mens lives, who dye a casual and violent Death, is fixed and determined;

mined ; but he needed not to have put himself to so much trouble , since I never maintained , that the World is left to its own casual revolutions. If he had pleased , he might have viewed *pag. 76.* where he will find , I grant , *that the most seemingly usual periods of men, are ordered by an infinite wisdom, and fall under the Divine Rule and Dominion.*

NEITHER needs the Author redouble his *NOW, NOW* we have the Author yielding ; because I said , *we never doubted, but the great Governour of the world may make what reserved cases he pleases from the general Rule , and the ordinary course of things, pag. 111.* This methinks is a very plain Truth ; but that I may do all I can to satisfy the Author, I shall add , that the reason why some mens lives may be unalterably determined , and yet the Period of other mens may for or-

B 3 dinary

dinary be left mutable, is, because the supream Governour of the World thinks fit it should be so. If this will not suffice the Author, let him choose as he thinks best.

BUT to proceed, *since the first step (says he) and moment of our Beings is determined, it is but reasonable to think that the last is also fixed.* *Answer.* It is extreamly reasonable, only we must take heed that we do not wrest Scripture to patronize our own self-chosen opinions: Now the Text brought to prove that the first moment of our Being is determined, is *Psal. 139. 16.* which is a very odd Paraphrase of the Author's, for the Psalmist there is not speaking of the Divine Decrees, but of the infinity of the Divine knowledge, which is a depth he confesses he cannot Fathom. Now that God doth know both the first and last moments of our life, is a Truth

Truth I am as ready to defend as the Author.

BUT I see the Author is resolved to dispute with me, as if I were an enemy to a particular Divine Providence; else to what purpose does he bring his following troop of Arguments?
As

1. *All the actions and works, all the ways and steps of man, are ordered by God.* *Ans.* All this is confessed by me; if he urgeth them against any other, let those concerned make answer.

2. *All other animate Beings (says he) are determined.* *Ans.* To what and how are they determined? I know they have a Being, and that they are all dependent Creatures. But do you seriously think that God from Eternity did by an absolute Decree determin the Period of every Creature? Can you without a certain reluctancy say, that the supream and adorable

Being of whom we ought to entertain noble and becoming thoughts, did by an absolute Decree determin the particular Period of every Flea: Pray consider, Sir, what you say.

3. *Inanimate Beings* (says he) *are also limited.* *Answ.* When God first Created the World, he put every thing in a fit and convenient Station; and so exactly ordered every piece of the Creation, that it should be subservient to the whole. Hence he set bounds to the Waters, and appointed the Sun, Moon, and Stars, to be for Signs, and for Seasons, and for Days, and Years; and according to the Primitive Precept, every thing (Angels and Men excepted) stands according as he ordered. But yet these inanimate things are not so fixed, as that upon extraordinary occasions he cannot alter their course.

4. *Do we not (says he) read of the determined Period of Kings and Kingdoms?* *Answ.* Undoubtedly we do, but what then? Do you imagin that God by an absolute Decree did determin the Periods of particular Kings and Kingdoms? Pray consider what the Majesty of Heaven hath said, *1 Kings 9. 4, 5, 6, &c.* *If thou wilt keep my Statutes and Judgments, then I will Establish the Throne of thy Kingdom upon Israel for ever; but if you will not keep my Commandments and my Statutes, then will I cut off Israel, &c.* Surely the most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men, he putteth down one, and setteth up another, and according as men obey his Statutes, so he dispenseth his favours to them.

5. *It is a dangerous thing (says he) to grant, that the most inconsiderable thing is exempted from the Hand of Divine Providence.* *Answ.*

I am very far from thinking, that the Author is an Enemy to the Divine Providence; but truly of the two opinions, that which he maintains seems to enervate it more than mine; for if God has from Eternity absolutely decreed every thing, then a particular providence whereby he superintends and governs all things, seems not to have any place; but the opinion I maintain puts all things in the hands of God, who may do in Heaven and in Earth as he thinks fit. He may shorten or prolong my life, he may do with me as he pleaseth, for he is our Maker, and we the work of his own hands. This encourageth me to wait and depend upon him, because I know he is the Governour of the World, and has so absolute a Dominion, that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?

HENCE not only those things

things which sustain and uphold men in Being, but also the Period of every man's life depends upon God: As he may either give or deny those necessary things, so may he also shorten or prolong our life. And thus there is no need of running to the absolute Decree.

6. *It is (says he) an old and unquestionable Maxim of Philosophers, cujusque contradictionis altera pars determinatè vera est, altera falsa.*

Answ. The Maxim is very true, but not very pertinently applied. For supposing there had never been a World, and so no Decree concerning any thing future; yet this had been true, *both parts of a contradiction cannot be true.* But now if the Author means, that the operations of free Agents are all absolutely determined; this he must prove by some other *medium* than that Philosophick Maxim, which only infers that one part
of

of the contradiction is true, but leaves us ignorant which of the two.

AFTER all this he comes at length to Catechise me most severely. *Will ye* (says he) *have your recourse to a Stoical fate, or Turkilh necessity?* No, good Sir, I assure you I will not, but I am afraid some others may. *Will ye plead* (says he) *from the fortuitous concourse of Epicurean Atoms?* Or — Pray Sir hold, for it is so long since I was last examined, that I have almost forgot the trick of answering. If I should permit you to proceed, I could only say *No* to all your Questions; and I believe you knew well enough that I was as much an Enemy to all these as your self.

BUT I see what you have yet said are but slender attempts, and only in order to a more noble and grand design. It is well
your

your small Shot, discharged in these light Skirmishes, have not hurt us. Come let us proceed, and see the event of the fight.

If God (says he) has not by an absolute Decree determined the Period of every man's life; how can the certainty of the Divine foreknowledge be defended? Answ. Could the Author be contented with it as the Scriptures leave it, there need be little debate in the case. The Gentleman is pleased to say, that I seem to be like a Ship tossed with a great Storm; but he might have more truly said, that I think that it is a bold enquiry which concerns not us to know, the depths of the Divine Wisdom are too profound for Mortals to measure; and since Sacred Writ calls it a depth, I am sure it is safest to break out into that extasie of admiration with the Apostle, *Rom. 11. 33. O the depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom*
and

and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?

I F God had ever designed that we should know those secrets, he had certainly disclosed them in his revealed Word; but since Scripture is silent, it is our Wisdom to forbear a curious search into things which he hath reserved within his own peculiar Jurisdiction.

BUT I see this will not serve the Author's turn, he will have the very manner of Gods knowledge of future things determined; and if I cannot tell, yet he can unfold this Secret, by saying, *that God has from Eternity absolutely Decreed every thing, therefore he certainly knows every thing.* And now because this is the grand Doctrin he always repeats, I shall with-

without being very tedious, first shew him, that we have no ground to believe that every future action is absolutely decreed. And secondly, I shall endeavour to shew, that the Divine knowledge is notwithstanding certain and infallible.

1. WE have no ground to believe, that every future action is absolutely decreed, because God does certainly know all sinful and criminal actions, and yet we cannot rationally conclude that he has absolutely decreed those actions, for this doth neither agree with the justice nor goodness of God. Do you think that a just and good God (who is the Judge of all the Earth) would punish men with everlasting Torments, if he had by an absolute decree determined that they should commit all these Sins? Methinks if this were the case of these miscreants, they might reasonably excuse themselves

selves before their Judge, by al-
 ledging, that they could not do
 otherwise. But truly there is no
 ground for this plea, for he hath
 left men inexcusable, and doth
 not tempt any man to Sin.

B U T I remember the Author
 distinguisheth between an *effe-*
ctive and *permissive decree*. *Answer.*
 I could never yet well understand
 what they mean by a *permissive*
decree: If they say, God only per-
 mits Sin, they say right; but
 from thence they can expect no
 sanctuary, for this cannot accor-
 ding to them be a ground to infer
 any certain knowledge; for to
 permit Sin, is in this case only a
 not hindering of men in their
 wicked courses and ways. If you
 yet add, that in that permissive
 decree, the will of man, with
 all the circumstances of time and
 place are included. I Answer,
 that the decree is not then abso-
 lute but respective, since both
 persons

persons and their qualifications are considered: And I must confess this is very agreeable with several phrases of Scripture, particularly with that *Rom. 8. 29. For whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate.* So that if we even run up to the knotty point of predestination, we shall find that the Decrees, both of election and reprobation consider the qualifications of persons, and that foreknowledge preceeds any Decree: and indeed this was the opinion of all learned men before *S. Augustin's* time. *Scriptores veteres* (saith *Melancthon*, cited by *Episcopius*, in his second Epistle to *Bererovicus*) *omnes preter unum Augustinum, putarunt aliquam causam electionis in nobis esse.*

2. WE have clear evidences from Scripture informing us, that God did certainly know many things which should have been really future, if the conditions
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upon which their futuration depended had been placed. Our Saviour Christ tells us, that if the mighty works which were done in *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, had been done in *Tyre* and *Sidon*, they had repented. God knew that if *Cain* had done well, he should have been accepted. The whole tenor of the Scriptures abounds with many such like instances. If *Nineveh* had not repented, God knew that they should have been destroyed. It is not absurd to think that God would have threatned to inflict that punishment which he did not know; as certainly he would not, if their Doctrin concerning the absolute Decrees be true. But I remember I have in the former discourse insisted upon this argument; I shall therefore only now consider what the Author answers to the Texts of Scripture there cited.

THE first Text is 1 *Sam.* 23. 11, 12. which plainly shews, that God did certainly know, that if *David* had not departed from *Keilah*, the *Keilites* had delivered him into the hands of *Saul*. To this he answers, *That David was not curiously inquisitive concerning the Divine Will, for that was a Secret.* Reply. This is a strange fancy, for is it not as certain as any thing can be, that *David* enquired of the Lord whether *Saul* was come to *Keilah*, and if the *Keilites* would deliver him up; which *David* had not known ('till it may be, too late) if God had not revealed both. But he says, *there was no prediction of any thing which should be.* Answ. It's true, *Saul* did not come to *Keilah*, but certainly he should have come, if *David* had remained. And thus the prediction is of what should have happened, if *David* had not left *Keilah*.

And do you think that God would have foretold any thing but what he certainly knew ? Again he adds, *that the prediction was not concerning David's being delivered up, but concerning the inclinations of the people.* *Ans.* The Text speaks nothing of the inclinations of the people, but of a thing future; *They will deliver you up, viz.* if you stay with them: and so *David* does not inquire if *Saul* intends to come up, neither does the Answer he receives imply any such thing.

THE other Text is 2 *King.* 13. 19. where the Prophet is angry with the King of *Israel*, for smiting upon the ground but thrice; telling him, that if he had smitten five or six times; he had smitten *Syria*, till he had consumed it. To this he answers, *that is is altogether groundless to imagin, that God had decreed that Joash should smite the Ground more than thrice.*

thrice. *Answer.* We do not say that God had absolutely decreed how oft he should smite the Ground. Scripture makes no mention of any Decree, only this he tells us, that if *Joash* had smitten five or six times, he had totally subdued *Syria*. And truly, since we find the Prophet angry with him because he only smote thrice; we may rationally suppose that God had not absolutely decreed that he should smite no oftner. To suppose that the Revelation was general, is only a may be; and we may more warrantably say, what if it was not general?

3. LET us now come to examine the dangerous effects of this Doctrin of this absolute and unconditional Decrees, and the bad consequences which naturally proceed from it. 1. I have shewed that it destroys the freedom of Humane nature. And

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2. That it makes all lawfull means unnecessary ; see *the Period of Humane Life*, pag. 103. 3. It leaves no place for praise to the learned Physician, nor for dispraise to the unskillful Emphyrick, pag. 105. And 4. If this Doctrin be pursued to the uttermost, it engages men to expose themselves like fools or mad men to any danger.

BUT 2. Although God has not absolutely Decreed every future action, yet he hath an universal and certain cognisance of every thing. For 1. That I may argue (as they speak) *ad hominem*, I hope the Author will not deny that God knows every thing that is possible, and yet no man ever said, that God decrees what things are possible, and what not. God knew how to raise up Children unto *Abraham* out of the Stones, and yet I think there was no Decree concerning this.

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2. God knows whatsoever is true, but all future actions are true; if it be true that *Titius* died this day, in such a place, and of such a malady; this was from Eternity true, that he should dye this day, and in such a place. *But ye say,* an action is not future, but because it is decreed. *Ans^w.* That I may quickly dispatch this, I shall now freely impart what has fully for a long time satisfied me.

THE great and wise Creator, out of his meer pleasure, freely Created this World, and furnished it with varieties of Creatures, of different natures; amongst those, Man made after the Image of his Maker, was created a free Agent. Now since the Eternal Wisdom thought it expedient, that there should be such a Creature as Man; we must not take from him that free principle bestowed upon him in his

Creation : And since it is the good pleasure of Heaven, that Man in all his actions should act freely and without constraint, what reason have we to think that there is any absolute Decree which is inconsistent with this freedom? *And thus*, that there ever was such a Creature as Man, this is the meer result of the Divine Will; that Man acts freely and without constraint, this is also the effect of Divine Goodness: and thus all things depend upon the Divine Will. And because the Divine Knowledge is infinite, he therefore knows every thing that Man is to act; for whatsoever he acts is true, and so consequentially was from Eternity true. This methinks is a plain and easie way, to secure both the certainty of the Divine Knowledge, and the freedom of Humane Nature.

HAVING thus dispatched these two things I proposed, I now return to the Author; where first we find him fighting lustily with *Molina* and *Forseca*, and Cursing their Bastard (begotten, he says, in the dark, pardon this innocent piece of Drollery) *Scientia media*, with *Job's* imprecation.

ALTHOUGH it be a digression to discourse of this, yet since the Author thinks he has thereby ruined and undermined all I have said, I shall follow the Author, and briefly examin his arguments he urges against this Doctrin.

THE first assault he makes, is, *That I have recourse to the Jesuitical Port.* *Ans.* He having before compared me to a Ship tossed with a great Storm, it is no wonder though I be glad to get to any safe Haven; if it belongs to the *Jesuites*, the business

ness is not great, since the Port is secure. And I am sure the Author's Doctrin of *Physical pre-determination* is the invention of the *Dominicans*; *jam sumus ergo pares.*

BUT are there no *Protestant* Divines, who own and maintain, that God knows that many things should have been future, if such and such conditions had been placed? Does the Author know, that *Gomarus*, *Waleus*, and many other *Foreign Theologs*, have recourse to *Scientia media*: And at home, how many learned Doctors do defend it? Nay indeed your own *D. Twiss*, who seems to be one of the greatest Enemies to it, yet maintains a notion every whit as unconcievable (as you are pleased to call this) his *Decretum generale de sciendis Creaturas agere, congruenter ipsarum naturis*, is, may be, not much different from this.

BUT

BUT if the opinion be true, it matters not much who defends it. Let us now hear what he Objects. *I shall (says he) only in a word or two manifest the unconceiveableness of this position.* *Answ.* I dare hazard for all this promise, he shall have *thirdly beloved*, ere he has done. His first word is, *Since antecedently to the Decree all things are purely possible, how can God know that such things are either absolutely or conditionally future?* *Answ.* 1. I confess God always knows things as they are, so that if there be nothing future, he could not know them to be future. 2. I grant that it is only the result of the Divine Goodness, that there was ever such a Creature as man. Yet 3. Since God did make man a free Agent, and gave him power to act without constraint; not Physically pre-termining his Will, nor by any absolute Decree fatally over-
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powering his inclinations, leaving him no liberty for choice: Hence it is, that all and every act that man elicits, is certainly fore-known, although not absolutely determined. For by vertue of that Primitive Precept, men act as freely, as rational Agents act necessarily.

A N D thus that grand Objection does not militate against us. For we grant that antecedently to the Decree, Man, and all his future actions were only possible; but after Almighty God had decreed or purposed to make Man, all his future actions, although not absolutely determined, were yet certainly known: and the reason of both, is, because Man being made a free Agent, there can be no absolute Decree everting and overthrowing his nature; and since he was to elect such and such actions, an infinite understanding behoved to know them.

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HIS second argument is, *That all knowledge depending upon conditions, is first suspended, and secondly conjectural.* *Ans.* We do not say that Divine Knowledge does depend upon conditions; all that we claim, is, that God knows that many things should have been future, if the conditions had been placed: And this we judge is altogether agreeable to Sacred Writ. So that it is only the futuration of things, and not the Divine Knowledge, that depends upon conditions.

'TIS true, man being a free Agent, he may either act or not act, even then when all things requisite for acting are placed: but yet it must be granted, that the Will cannot always hang in an *aquilibrio*; since it is a self-determining principle, it must either will or *nil* the doing of such a thing, and this an infinite intellect doth certainly know.

3. **HE** Objects, *There is nothing conditionally future in respect of God: For either the Condition is to be placed, and so it becomes absolutely future; or else it is never to be placed, and so it is only possible.*

Ans. I have frequently heard this argument urged, as if it were unanswerable; but I must confess, if my judgment be any ways regardable, it is the only result of ignorance. For first, those who urge it, seem to mistake what is meant, when men distinguish betwixt things absolutely and conditionally future. Things *absolutely future*, are those things which do not depend upon any condition: but things *conditionally future*, are such things as are really future, if the conditions be placed; and should not have been future, if they had not been placed.

NOW although the condition be not placed, yet they differ
 hugely.

hugly from things which are meerly possible; for the things meerly possible, are not future upon the placing of whatsoever condition: but things conditionally future, should have been really future, if the conditions had been placed.

BUT the Author adds, *That all conditions are included in the absolute Decree.* *Answ.* If there be any conditions included in the Decree, it ceaseth to be absolute; as every mans reason will easily teach him.

AFTER all this the Author tells me, *it is not in his power to reconcile me with my self.* Strange! what an unknown quarrel is this? alas! have I been so unwary as to contradict what I had formerly said; and is the Author willing, but unable to take up the difference? Since he pretends he is not, I will essay what may be done. First, *we have no ground*

to think that God decrees every future action. And the reason I said so, was, because there are many sinful actions which the Majesty of Heaven forbids, and therefore does not absolutely Decree them: And yet I grant, *that the most contingent actions depend immediately upon the Divine Will:* Because the reason why Man was made a free Agent, and acts without constraint, is, because God did Will both.

AND thus I have examined what the Author brings in defence of his own opinion. I come now to survey what he answers to what I urge against it. And

I. I TOLD, *That this Doctrine is a good plea for wicked men.* To this he Answers, *that in the Schools they speak of a two-fold Decree, the one effective, the other permissive.* Reply. I have already discovered the insufficiency of
 this

this Answer, and therefore shall not repeat.

2. I T O L D, *That it is inconsistent with the freedom of Humane nature.* In Answer to this, he alledgeth, *That the decree does not hinder, but helps Men to act freely.* Reply. Let us examin if it be so; you affirm that God has by an absolute Decree, determined the Period of *Titius* his Life, and that he has also as absolutely decreed every thing that he shall do; now I desire to know of *Titius*, who is a free Agent, that can do any other thing but what is decreed, or if he can do otherwise? If you say he cannot, then pray how is he left a free agent, since he must do all that is decreed, and can do no other thing.

B U T he says, *All kinds of necessity are not inconsistent with liberty.* Answ. What then, is there no kind of necessity inconsistent

sistent with it? And is not Man become a necessary Agent, if he cannot but act so and so? Is there any resisting of the decree? But he adds, *We only plead for a determination of events.* *Ans.* The Will is then left free, and God only determines the thing, but not the Will. Pray how absurd is this in this Authors own judgment.

3. I TOLD, *That this opinion leaves no place for praise to the learned Physician, nor for dispraise to the unskilful Empyrick.* He Answers, *That the Physicians deserve praise, because they act as freely as if there were no Decree.*

Reply. The Author had done well if he had made this plain, for that which he alledgeth is all along denied by us; and the reason we gave, was, because if the Physician does only prescribe those Medicaments, he was absolutely decreed to ordain; and if he can pre-

prescribe no other, then he deser-
veth no praise, since he does
no more but what he could not but
do.

4. I TOLD, *That this opi-
nion by a genuine consequence indu-
ceth men to expose themselves to any
danger: For if the Terminis vite
est immobilis; what need men
fear to run upon the mouth of
the roaring Cannon; if it be
their fate to dye, they cannot by
all their Art and Skill evite death;
if it be not fatally determin'd,
then let us face any danger, we
have good enough proof against
it. To this he answers, That it
is just like that argument which Sa-
tan propounds to our Lord Christ,
Matth. 4. 6. Reply. I am not ad-
vising any Man to cast himself
upon those dangers, only I tell
what is the consequence of this
Doctrin. Now our blessed Ma-
ster is justly offended with Satan,
because of his malicious design in*
D 2 urging

urging that argument. But there is no question but the argument was strong, and this Christ does not challenge.

But (says he) we must not make the secret determinations of the Divine Council our rule. Reply. If they be secret Councils, we cannot make them our rule: But sure they can no more be said to be secret, since so many Men pretend to know, that God has absolutely determined every thing.

I HAVE quickly dispatched his Answers, because they are indeed slight and inconsiderable. Now let us hear how he vindicates his opinion from that unjust (as he calls it) imputation I have cast upon it; namely, that I say, *it is only the opinion of the Stoicks, dressed up in better apparel: The word Fate is hateful (says he) in the Christian Schools.* Reply. May be the Author will find himself

to be in a mistake here : I shall only recommend to him an Author, with whom he seems to be intimately enough acquainted ; and that is, *Voetius de vitæ termino* ; in Answer to Object. 6.

Apud Philosophos (says he) *varie occurrunt fati explicationes, quarum aliqua à veritate & pietate nihil alienum sonant. — Nec desunt inter antiquos et recentiores veri Docti qui Stoicorum placitum in dextram partem interpretentur.*

AND indeed any man that compares the two opinions, will find them to be upon the matter the same: the difference that the Author gives betwixt the two, is the very same that I mentioned and told him of. But it is needless to insist here, for the thing is palpable and cannot be denied.

IN the last place the Author comes to answer those arguments I urged in defence of the *mutabi-*

lity of the Period of Humane life. My first argument was, upon the observance of the Divine Laws, there are many promises in Scripture assuring us of length of days; and on the other side, there are many threatnings of cutting short the days of the wicked. In Answer to this, the Author alledgeth many things.

1. HE tells us, *The words prolong, shorten, &c. do not properly signifie to make longer or shorter, but only imply length or shortness of days.* Reply. I confess I do not well understand this distinction; but suppose the words were to be understood as the Author takes them, yet all we plead for stands firm: for those that obey the Statutes shall live long, which (with the Author's leave) is the same with having their days prolonged.

2. *In these promises (says he) God deals with Men, as Parents use*

use to deal with their sick Children: They promise them many things, rather to encourage them to take the bitter potion prescribed, than out of a real intention to bestow such things. Reply. This Answer is indeed unworthy to be considered, since it so much reflects upon the Divine wisdom and goodness, of which we and all men ought to entertain generous and becoming thoughts: His promises and threatnings too, are real and serious. It is not to allure or flatter Men to live holily, that he promiseth to lengthen their days; when he well knows he had absolutely fixed the Period of their life.

3. HE says, *A good life is a long life, and that Abraham died in a good old age, because he was a good Man.* Reply. I know not whether I should smile at the wit and ingenuity of this Answer, or commend the Author for

his happy invention: But it matters not which of them we admire.

4. *The wicked (says he) are said not to live out half their days, because according to the ordinary course of nature, the date of their lives might have been longer.* Reply. But if the Period of their lives be absolutely determined, this supervenient Decree takes away that supposed possibility of their living longer. 2. This Answer is so slight and inconsiderable as to the end for which it is produced, that it does not in the least agree with the words of the Text; for in this sense, many godly Men may be said not to live out half their days. But the Psalmist by such a phrase holds out, that the impiety of the wicked is the cause that their days are shortened; which he could not have said, if their days had been absolutely determined.

5. HE says, *The wicked may be said not to live out half their days, in respect of their hopes and expectations.* Reply. The sacred Text makes no mention of the hopes and expectations of the wicked; nor does this Paraphrase any ways agree with the Psalmists intention.

1. THE Psalmists intention was to shew, that wickedness is the reason and cause of Mens short lives. Now if he had only meant their hopes and expectation, he needed not have made any mention of the wicked; for this might have been applicable to the most part of Men, both good and bad.

2. IT agrees not with the Text, for if their days be determined, they live out their whole time, let them dye whensoever: So that he could never have said, *They shall not live out half their days.* And indeed this had been

no great punishment inflicted upon the wicked for their Sins; if it mean only their hopes; for good Men may thereby be as well included: and the wicked are not a whit more unhappy than others, if the case be so.

THE Author is angry with me, because I said, *That if we consult experience, we shall find the Religious and Vertuous Men enjoy ordinarily far the longest lives.* Truly I see no reason to repent what I said; nor does the wise Man's Observation any ways contradict this; for all that he aims at there, is to shew, that a good Man's Righteousness will not be able to defend him from the malice and cruelty of the Wicked, and that Wicked Men may pass on in their Sins without controul.

THAT the Divine promises are notable encouragements to live holy and devoutly, is very plain.

plain and undoubtable: But yet it may be questioned whether, according to some Mens principles, they be useful for the foresaid end.

A S E C O N D argument I did urge, was taken *from the pious and devout Prayers of the Righteous, and their turning from their Sins by an hearty Repentance.* To this he Answers, *That the Divine Statutes, although they be irrevocable, yet do not exclude the use of Prayer, because it is included in the Decree.* Reply. I have already told if there be any condition, the Decree is not absolute: But because I find the Author has always recourse to this fancy, I shall briefly evidence, that the Author cannot make use of such an evasion. *Prayer and Repentance (says the Author) are conditions absolutely decreed, and therefore they are necessary.* Reply. The Stoicks may have recourse to this,
as

as well as you: For Prayer and Repentance are hereby made necessary, not because Men elicit those acts as parts of their duty, but because they cannot do otherwise. And thus the Prophet *Daniel* could not but pray, that Gods anger should be removed from his people *Israel*; because it was absolutely before decreed. The like was *David's* case, and others, mentioned by the Author.

BUT by this means, the promises of Scripture can be of no use to induce us to live holily, for they are not conditional: Thus, if you obey the Divine Statutes, ye shall live long; and if ye rebel, ye shall be punished. But you shall obey the Divine precepts, and live long; and you shall live wickedly, and have your days shortned.

T H A T Prayer and Repentance have been the means of prolonging

longing many Mens lives , is obvious to experience ; some few instances to confirm so plain a truth , I laid down in the first discourse. I shall therefore now only examin the Author's Answer.

THE first instance was concerning the case of *Nineveh* , where I told , *That their Repentance did prevent the Execution of the threatned Judgment.* To this he answers ; 1. *That Prayer and Repentance do not move God to change his Decree.* Reply. We do not say that they do , only we say , there was no absolute , but conditional Decree in the case. 2. He says ; *That their Repentance was from Eternity decreed.* Reply. How then could the threatning be serious ? Do you think that a holy , wise , and just God would threaten to inflict a Judgment upon a people ; when he had absolutely decreed that such a Judgment should not be

be inflicted? To this, which he could not but take notice of, he answers, *That such threatnings only imply, that the nature of the crime deserved to be punished with this Judgment.* Reply. I know the merit of every Sin is death, but this is no Answer to the difficulty, for the threatening not only implies the demerit of the offence, but also expressly declares, that the Judgment threatned should be inflicted, if they did not by their Prayers and Repentance prevent the Execution of it.

A S E C O N D instance I urged, was *Hezekiah's recovery, &c.* To this he Answers, 1. *That we must distinguish between the threatnings and decrees of God.* Reply. Well, we shall observe this caution, but upon this proviso, that the Author will not make the threatening inconsistent with the Decree: for if God had absolutely decreed that *Hezekiah* should not

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not dye 'till the fifteen years were expired, then how could the threatning, *Thou shalt surely dye and not live*, be serious? But that the first was not absolutely decreed appears to be plain; for otherwise, how could the fifteen years be said to have been *added to his life*?

2. HE says, *The denunciation of death was a conditional commination absolutely propounded, inducing Hezekiah to Repentance, having no respect to the absolute Decree.*

Reply. This Answer is not conform'd nor agreeable to the Author's principles, for he alledgeth that both the threatning and Repentance are absolutely decreed: now if the threatning had been an argument to engage *Hezekiah* to Repentance, we must suppose that Repentance was not absolutely decreed, but a thing depending upon *Hezekiah's* will; otherwise both the threatning and
 Repen-

Repentance were flight, and of no force: Nay indeed, since the commination was only a Moral act, it might have been an inefficacious motive. But since it had (as the Author will say) its efficacy from the internal operation of the holy Spirit, hence is it, that Repentance can be no condition required on Man's part, since it is not in his power not to Repent when God works it in him. And truly this makes the threatenng ridiculous, for how can it be a motive to induce to Repentance, since Repentance is absolutely decreed, and in time by a Physical predetermining act wrought in Man nill he will he.

HOW the Author will be able to absolve himself from having any respect to the two dangerous opinions, he says we must by all means avoid, I wish he would seriously consider.

I DO not well understand the meaning of one phrase the Author useth, *viz.* *That God did not will that Hezekiah should dye when he threatned him; only he willed that there should be such a threatning.* This is indeed pretty subtile, but I know not for what end it was brought: Sure it is not very pertinently alledged, if he thinks hereby to prove, that there is no opposition between the Decree and the threatning; as may appear by what I have already said.

3. WE must distinguish (says he) *between the conjectural certainty of death, inferred from the fatal events which frequently accompany dangerous Diseases; and the infallible certainty of death, inferred from the Decree.* Reply. The distinction is without controversie good, and it is but reason we believe it; but I assure the Author's application is not always allowable.

I shall make this out by considering how he applies this distinction. *In respect of the first* (says he) *Hezekiah's death might have been said to be certain.* Reply. We are not to debate what *might* have been, but what really was. Now that denunciation, *Thou shalt certainly dye and not live*; was no conjecture taken from the danger of the disease, but a prediction or prophecy revealed by God to his servant *Isaiah*.

ANOTHER instance I urged, was *Jer. 18. 7, 8.* where we have a lively proof of the vertue and efficacy of Prayer and Repentance. To this he repeats his old answer, *That they are therefore efficacious because included in the Decree.* Reply. If they be indeed as absolutely decreed as the end, then they are truly efficacious, but not as conditions required of us to perform, but because they cannot but be efficacious,

cacious, because decreed: And thus all things come to pass fatally.

A T H I R D argument to prove that our lives may be extended or shortened, I urged from the use of Medicaments. To this he Answers, *That it is a precarious principle to separate the means from the end, since the Decree is of both.* Reply. If the Decree including both be absolute, then both the means and the end must be: But then, as I already told, the means are placed not in reference to the end, but because they could not but be placed. There were but two consequences which we have always alternatively urged; namely, if the Period of Humane life be absolutely determined, then either Humane care and industry is needless, since all the Medicaments of the World cannot prolong our life one moment beyond the Divine decree;

nor the neglect thereof shorten our life: Or else those Medicaments we must use are likewise absolutely decreed, and then we must of necessity use them: And thus all care and choice, all consultation and deliberation is quite destroyed. The skillful Physitian upon this account deserves no praise, nor the ignorant any challenge; for the necessity that is placed excludes both.

NOW if the opinion the Author maintains does not condemn the use of Medicaments, yet it introduceth a fatal necessity, which is every whit as repugnant as the former, and inconsistent with the principles of Reason and Religion.

AND thus *Abraham* could not neglect the care of his Son *Isaac*; and *Hezekiah* could not but use the means, notwithstanding he knew fifteen years should be added to his life: for in the Author's

thor's judgment both were absolutely decreed.

4. I TOLD, *Nothing is more evident, than that there are several things which have a Physical efficacy, both in the prolonging and shortening of our lives.* He Answers, 1. That God does not hinder second causes from acting, according to that power he hath implanted in them. Reply. Although this be no Answer to the argument, yet I shall take notice of it, as I have done of many things which did not much deserve to be regarded. And 1. That God does not for ordinary hinder second causes from acting, according to that power implanted in them in their Creation, is true: But yet in extraordinary cases, the supreme Governor of the World may overpower the Wills of the free Agents, and hinder them from acting what their Wills are bent to commit, and he may impede

natural Agents in acting what naturally they are determined to do. But 2. How can the Author imagine this to be reconcileable with his opinion? For it is the nature of a free Agent to elicit actions freely; but if God has from the out-goings of Eternity absolutely decreed every thing they shall do, they are no more left at liberty to do or not do, but they must of necessity elicit the act they are determined to. But the Author adds, *That all things which conduce, either to the prolonging or shortning of our life, are included in the Decree.* Reply. If they be indeed included in the Decree, then it is not absolute but conditional, and upon fore-sight of mens being placed in those circumstances; but if he say that all circumstances are absolutely decreed, then I again tell him that he must shew us how all things come not to pass by a Fatal necessity.

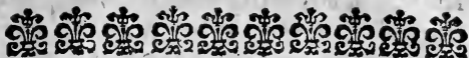
THE last argument I urged, was, *That many Men had lived longer, if they had not foolishly exposed themselves to danger.* To this he Answers, *That Mens exposing themselves to danger was included in the Decree.* Reply. If the Author means that God did foresee all the circumstances which Men are placed in, in time, and then decreed the Period of their life; he may indeed say, that Mens exposing of themselves to danger is included in the Decree: But if he thinks that God did decree that Men should be exposed to those dangers which put a Period to their lives, then he entertains unbecoming thoughts of God; and wherever he learned this Doctrin, I am sure it hath no Foundation in Scripture. See this more fully cleared, *Period of Humane Life*, pag. 133, 134.

THERE remains no more now, but that I conclude with

my earnest intreaty, that Men would heartily comply with the last words of the Author's discourse; namely, *That it is our wisdom and advantage to live as those, who know that e're long a Period shall be put to their Beings.* If the Author be offended that I have considered his Answer, I hope I shall please him by saying,

*Non equidem vellem, sed me mea
Fata trahebant.*

F I N I S.



A N

APPENDIX.

WHEREIN SEVERAL

OBJECTIONS,

URGED

In private Conferences, are examined.

TOGETHER WITH

*A Survey of Mr. GALE'S
severe, but groundless charge.*

THE great desire I have to clear all doubts which can be urged against the opinion I defend, has engaged me in several private conferences to try what arguments men of better judgment

ment than my self can produce.

But the truth is, instead of arguments, all I could hear urged was odious censures, which as I have always accounted unquestionable evidences of a bad cause, so do I apprehend that method very incongruous, either to convince others, or to find out the truth.

And although I have no great desire to put my hand into a Hornets Nest, yet because I now intend to put a close to this debate, I shall briefly examin all those particular charges I have met with, hoping that henceforth men will shew more candor and ingenuity, and not rashly and inconsiderately calumniate an Author they know not, nor condemn an opinion with hard words, when they can urge nothing of reason against it.

The first heavy charge I met with, is, that the opinion I defend is not *Orthodox*, and that the Author is an *Arminian*; this censure I have in part already considered, I shall therefore now only desire to know by what rule they measure an opinion to be true or false? If they will make Scripture judge, I am sure their charge is false; see *Period of Humane Life*, pag. 118, 119, &c. Nay, if they will but stand to the determination of reason, they will find themselves at a loss; but if they run from Scripture and reason, and make their own crooked fancy the rule, I cannot help the matter.

Common experience convinceth us, that the most uncouth notion is judged *Orthodox* by some men, and that the best opinion has not had the good hap to be entertained by all men; but the odious censures of men is not enough
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to make a good opinion bad, otherwise we should be continual seekers; but never find one Truth.

I confess they are but little acquainted with the Writings of *Orthodox* Divines, who say they oppose the mutability of the Period of Humane Life; for my own part I could never find any condemn it but the *Stoicks* of old and of late Mr. *Hobbs*, and his Disciples, and those who run up to the absolute decrees of Election and Reprobation. And although it be rejected and disallowed by such, yet I hope they are not the only *Orthodox* Divines.

The present age (God be thanked) is wiser than to be affrighted with the word *Arminian*; those who use such Objections may please themselves to dispute with Children; but if they combat with Men, they will be but jeered and contemned. I confess some few years since it was scandal enough

enough to be called an *Arminian*; but those dark days are gone, and I hope in after ages that which some men account an opprobrious charge, shall be esteemed Honourable.

Notwithstanding all this, I do not say that I am an *Arminian*, nor am I offended at others who call themselves *Calvinists*: But methinks it were more Christian like to reject all such names which keep up differences amongst us, than to say, *I am of Paul*, and *I of Apollo*, and a third distinct from both, *I am of Cephas*.

2. Some men have told me, if the shortning or lengthening out of our life doth depend upon our use, or neglect of the means, then Gods particular providence in Governing the World is enervated, if not quite destroyed.

Ans. I have been far rather induced to believe, that the Antithesis

titheſis of the opinion we defend, oppoſeth the Divine providence; for truly if all things are fatally fixed from Eternity by an abſolute Decree, whether there be any providence or not, things muſt come to paſs according to that ſempiternal ſeries and concatenation of cauſes; but by maintaining the mutability of the Period of Human Life, the Divine providence doth moſt conſpicuouſly appear, ſometimes in removing thoſe things which ſhould have put a Period to our Beings; ſometimes permitting us to be expoſed to unſeen and unexpected dangers. O how wonderful, wiſe, and myſterious are the ways of God! His Providence is univerſal, and extending to the moſt inconfiderable actions. But yet we muſt not fooliſhly imagin, men are acted like meer Machins. The Divine providence doth not deſtroy the innate freedom of Human natures.

natures. It is indeed evident by the light of nature, that the great Creator of the World should order and govern it. No Parent is so regardless of his Children as to expose them to the dangers of the World. The very Brutes by a natural instinct guard, secure, and take care of their young. And can we think that our kind Creator who has implanted these principles of Care and Kindness in his Creatures towards their offspring; shall be less regardless of his own Creatures.

We then heartily accord that the Divine providence is vigilant and universal, and the opinion we maintain gives us all the encouragements that can be, to entertain so noble and generous thoughts of that adorable Being, who upholds us in Being. How frequently had a Period been put to our lives, if his watchful eye and careful providence had not
 secu-

red us from imminent dangers.

When I consider that the Period of my life is not immutably and absolutely fixed, but may be Millions of ways shortened, this encourages me to cast myself upon the Divine care and providence. But for others who are of a contrary opinion, I confess I cannot see how they have any motive to do so, for they being once confirmed in that opinion, that their days can neither be extended nor shortened, they need use no diligence for their safety; they cannot be encouraged to address themselves to their Heavenly Father by Prayer, since all Care, Diligence, Prayer, &c. are ineffectual, and cannot alter the determination.

3. Others have told me, that I make the Creature independent.

Ans. They may as well say, I make the Creature the Creator, for

for both are equally false. I confess it is not in my power to keep men from deducing illegal consequences, and leading an opinion with inferences it is utterly unacquainted with: yet, since they are pleased to observe this method, I will first vindicate my own opinion, and then examin whether theirs can be more justly condemned.

First, then altho I grant that the Period of Humane Life, is for Ordinary, Mutable; yet, I constantly affirm, That God is the Supream Moderator and Governor of the world, and is this to make the Creator independent? nay, Almighty God not only adhibets a general concurse, but he also in a more special and particular providence, - either affords or withdraws occasions of Safety: It is in his power to Shorten or Prolong our lives, and this he does many different

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ways, which because they are sometimes ordinary and common, we but seldom regard them, but when by an extraordinary providence he affords us unexpected deliverances, we are then more sensible that his hand brought us help; And is all this a deifying of the Creature?

That Man, Created a free agent should be absolutely and Physically predetermined to act, is a harsh notion, quite contradictory to the common sentiments of mankind, and yet by opposing this Predetermining influx, I do not make man an independent Creature; for an independent Creature is a plain contradiction; but it is evident enough, that it implies no contradiction, for God to Create a free agent, who shall not stand in need to be Physically predetermined to every act. Now this once being admitted, it may

may easily appear, that the Period of Humane Life is not immutably fixt; for since man acts freely, he may either chuse or reject, this or the other means, upon which the extention, or abbreviation, of his Life consists.

And yet Man is not hereby made an independent being, for as God hath set bounds to him, over which he cannot pass, *It being appointed for all men once to die;* So hath he also absolute rule of him, and may say, *return ye Children of men.* And thus although man is made a free agent, yet he is not exempted from the Divine Providence.

But, Those who defend the contrary opinion; although they grant that man does in all his actions depend upon God, yet, they of necessity must deny that he immediatly depends upon him: for, besides the Divine eternal Volition, they more over add a

Physical predetermining influx, efficaciously and irresistably moving the will, which must necessarily mediate between the Creator and Man.

And thus, although God has not absolutely decreed the Period of every Mans Life, nor does by a Physical predetermining impulse move him to act, which should make him rather a Machin than a Man, yet Man is not independent in acting, but depends immediately upon the Divine Will, as I have already explained.

Indeed he who thinks the Creature is independent, if it be not Physically predetermined to act, entertains a strang notion of independency: for it is certain that the Humane Will is not thus predetermined to sinful acts, and I also desire to know if necessary agents be thus acted: methinks such a superadded determination

mination is very needless since that natural propention, which the great Creator endued them with, is fixed and permanent and sufficient enough to determine them to act: for instance the Fire, by it's natural determination, necessary burns the wood, and it needs no impulse, or superadded motion to determine it, and yet neither the Human Will nor free agent are independent beings.

But not to insist in the refutation of such trivial censures, which the Authors can never form in mode and figure against what I have laid down in that discourse, I shall now in the close examine Mr. *Gales* severe charge laid down in his *Court of the Gentiles* part 3. page.

As an Appendix (Says he) to natural Philosophy, we may add Medicine which has had a powerful influence upon Atheisme in

this regard, because these proud Naturalists observing by long experience many excellent qualities, virtues and Medicinal influences, in several Minerals, Stones, Plants, Animals, *in &c.* hence would fain persuade themselves and the World, the term of Mans Life was not fixt but variable and determinable by their art and Medicaments, which piece of Atheism continues to this very day very common.

Methinkes Mr. *Gale* if he had been so good natured, might have very well spared this Scandalous language and not have treated those Learned men so contemptuously; but I see it is his humor to make every thing have an influence upon Atheism, and to quarrel with all Philosophy but his own Reformed Scheme: and yet it is ten to one if some ill natured Inquisitive men find not out some vanity, and malignity in
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his own, which whether it may arise from the vanity and malignity of the object. Or 2. From the vanity and malignity of the subject. Or, 3. from the curse of God or both, is an Enquiry I shall not determin in, till I better understand what sence these phrases can admit.

But methinks it is a strange thing why he is so much offended with Pagan Philosophers, since he alleadges as a prime cause of vain Philosophy, the innate, congenite darknes or the native ignorance of the understanding; now how unreasonable is it to challenge men for erring if ignorance be congenite or native to the understanding. He may as well be angry with them because they had not these clear revelations of the Divine mind we are now blessed with.

And yet, although there were many errors in their Philosophy,

we must not therefore condemn natural Philosophy nor reject all those arts and sciences which have errors necessary (in this imperfect state) annexed to them; if we do so we must reject all arts and sciences and even his (I had almost mistaken and said) *own* reformed Philosophy. That Idolatry, Atheism, &c. are the effects of natural Philosophy, is a dangerous position of the Authors; for by the dark light of nature men may know that there is a God and that Divine worship and adoration is only to be given to that Supreme and Adorable Being, and if natural Philosophy be rejected how shall we be able to dispute with Atheists who wickedly deride Sacred Writ.

But as natural Philosophy hath no powerful influence upon Atheism, so neither hath Medicine, which he adds as an appendix to the former, however
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the Authors unbounded Zeal transports him beyond the just bounds of civility and moderation.

And now, that I may more particularly examin this censure, I shall first shew that Mr. *Gales* memory is as weak as his judgment; and that he has quite forgot that he makes this piece of Atheism the effect of Pagan Philosophy. Secondly, I shall make it evident that those proud (as he imprudently and with more arrogance calls them) Naturalists were neither proud in there observations he contemns, nor proud in the inference deduced from thence: and Thirdly, I shall make it plain that Mr. *Gale* may be justly charged with maintaining more dangerous opinions.

I begin with the First, to shew that Mr. *Gale* elsewhere seems to condemn himself for saying, that it is the effect of
Pagan

Pagan Philosophy to say, the Period of Humane Life is variable; to make out this I shall only desire him to review part 4, page 455. where he will find himself saying *I am not ignorant* (the words are Mr. Gales) *how much some of late, as well Divines as Phisitians, have essayed to exempt the Period or term of Humane Life from the immutable determination of Divine providence; but how much this hypothesis contradicts both Pagan and Sacred Philosophy, will be more fully evident, by what followes.*

Now, methinkes the Author took too much pains to note, that an effect of Pagan Philosophy, which he confesseth, is contradicted by it: but not to take any more notice of the Authors fighting with himself: I shall proceed to the Second; Namely, that Phisitians were neither Arrogant in there observations. he is pleased to mention

tion none yet in that inference deduced from hence.

First they were nor proud in their observations; for to take notice of the excellent qualities and virtues of Herbs, Minerals, Animals, &c. is so far from being discommended and reprehended, that it is rather to be regrated, that men of learning and abilities should want encouragements to proceed in such enquiries: and truly those who lay out there time in such a commendable study, will unquestionably be celebrated by posterity, when the names of those who discourage them shall be unfavory if not extinguished.

Can it be questioned by any, who pretends reason, that there are excellent noble and specific vertues in some Plants, Animals, and Minerals against several destempers? if this be doubted common experience

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rience will abundantly attest it; but since this is so plain and evident is it not lawfull from hence to infer that the Period of Human Life, is not absolutely fixt: for if this were true it were needless to search out the vertues and effects of those things, which can be used to no purpose.

But the great charge is, that to affirm the term of Mens lives is mutable, is *a piece of Atheism*.

To prevent such calumnies there is no help but according to the old saying *si accusasse sat esset quis foret innocens?* And I am sure the Scriptures teach us another lesson and right reason too; as for Pagan Philosophy I confess I am not so much concerned to examin it. I Know he has the Stoick Philosophers Patronizing his notion, while in health, but I doubt if sickness does not alter there judgments.

It is indeed good company to see the most strict Stoick and those of that persuasion, post away messengers for the Physician when under diseases; which is evidence enough that they do not believe the truth of what they maintain.

That the Hypothesis we defend contradicts neither natural nor Sacred Philosophy, has been plainly enough demonstrated in our former discourse, neither doth Mr. *Gale* for all his promise, urge it with any argument, but in stead of doing so he himself seems to be guilty of that which he injuriously blames in others: And thus I am led to the third thing proposed to be discussed; namely, that Mr. *Gale* may be justly charged with maintaining more dangerous opinions; and to make good this charge I shall only (because of the intended brevity) mention two particulars.

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The first is laid down in the Court of the *Gentiles* page 367. where distinguishing Gods Justice in Absolute and Ordinate he adds, *that God by his absolute justice and dominion can inflict the greatest torments even of Hell it self on the most innocent Creature.* This is

indeed a morsel which sober men cannot well swallow; it being so quite contrary to that common notion which all mankind entertain of God, and to those excellent attributes of his glorious nature, by which he has discovered himself to the world both by his word and workes.

That Almighty God is to be admired for his excellent power and works of wonder, no sober man ever doubted, but to admit an unlimited power incompatible with the principle attributes and perfections of his Glorious nature, such as his Goodness, Holiness, Mercy and Justice,

Justice, this were instead of exalting his excellent power, a denying of a Deity or at least a making him, who is altogether Holy, merciful and Good, seem (it is horrid to speak it) Savage and Cruel. The Divine goodness, truth and sanctity assure us that he can do nothing that is unbecoming his Glorious nature nor repugnant to his chiefe perfections displayed in his Sacred Word and dayly evident by his Workes.

Let us here appeal to judicious Mr. Calvin lib. de Etern. Dei predest. *Sorbonicum illud dogma in quo sibi plaudunt Papales Theologastri detestor, quod potentiam absolutam Deo affingit: Solis enim lucem à calore evellere facilius erit, quam Dei potentiam separare à justia.* and page 191. *faceffant ergo procul à pijs mentibus, monstrosæ illæ Speculationes, plus aliquid Deum posse quam conveniat, vel eum sine*

sine modo ac ratione quicquam agere,
 &c.

Surely if to destroy the righteous with the wicked temporally was rejected by *Abraham* as a piece of injustice, unbecoming the Divine goodness. *Gen. 18 25.* *That be far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked,* Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right: how much rather may we say so, when men tell us that God can inflict the greatest torments even of Hell it self on the most innocent Creature; it were easie to answer all the silly instances brought in defence of this horrid Doctrin, but I have said enough in the passing against it, only I must add that this is a most dangerous opinion inclining men to entertain unworthy conceptions of a Deity. *Plutarch lib. de Superst.* discoursing of the folly of the Pagans, to pacifie there offended Gods

Gods Sacrificed men and women to them, adds that *Diagoras*, and his Followers more reasonably maintained the Being of such Gods than those who confessed a God, and believed they could be appeased by such Savage cruelty.

The Second particular I shall instance, is laid down pag 483. and frequently else where, *God* (says he) *is the prime efficient cause of the material entitive act of Sin.* I know some others have undertaken the defence of this infamous Tenet, but patronize it who will, it is an uncouth opinion and chargeth the Holy Lord, who is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, with Mens Sins.

I confess, I could never yet understand what more was asserted by those blasphemous Hereticks, who boldly affirmed that God was the Author of Sin; for

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which pious antiquity did jointly condemn them; for if the evil or obliquity of Sin be (as they say) either privation or relation, it is evident that they necessarily result from the placing of such actions and cannot but follow their acts.

It is indeed pity, that our Reformed Divines should be all blamed for the faults only of a few who have imbibed this *Dominican* venom, and I have often regrated to see the *Jesuits* so miserably baffle men, maintaining this odd and uncouth notion, and yet it is but unhandsom dealing to charge that notion upon all reformed *Churches*, which has been alwayes condemned by the most Judicious Writers we have.

But to dispatch this as quickly as I can, I shall only desire a satisfactory Answer to the few following Queries.

First, If God be the prime efficient cause of the material entitive

entitive act (that I may use his phrase) of Sin, does not God necessitate the Will to Sin? since Man is hereby made the Instrumental cause and God the principal overruling efficient cause; and do you think that the Instrumental cause, can resist when the principle cause irresistably determines it to act?

Secondly, Is not the act pre-scinded from the object? A meer fancy and notion: Can there be either Love or hatred when their is no object to terminate them upon?

Thirdly, If the material act of Sin be Good, is not every sinfull act Morally Good as well as Morally Evil.

Fourthly, When we enquire if there be any thing in the hatred of God that is good, do we not Speak of a particular act terminat upon its object, and not of a Chimerical act which can have no being? G 2 Fifthly

Fifthly, Is not that Sinfull which is prohibited? but the act it self is forbidden Men, or forbidden to do such and such things, and their doing or acting makes them lyable to punishment. Do not Men by doing or omitting that which the Divine precepts forbid, become guilty? Is not Sin a transgression of the Law, and do not men transgress and violate the Divine precepts when they either commit or omit the forbidden action? Hence is it that very many Learned Men rationally conclude that Sin is not a privation, but a positive thing, since the act is always forbidden, and therefore it must be formally evil; and I confess it is a hard matter to conjecture what can be the foundation of that privation; or if the act be placed, how the obliquity does not necessarily result.

Sixthly, To permit is properly

a not hindring or impeding Men to act; therefore the act is permitted, for what can be hindered cannot be properly said to be permitted, but the obliquity is such.

Seventhly, If it were the obliquity and not the act that is permitted, then neither Devils nor Men could tempt us to Sin, for they cannot do any more but Intice and Allure us to the committing or omitting of the Acts, which being placed, the obliquity does necessarily result.

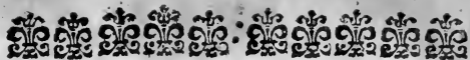
Eighthly, Are Man any other waies said to be hindered from Sinning, but because they are impeded from committing the Act; how then can the Holy Lord, be the prime efficient cause of the substrate matter, or material entitative Act of Sin?

I have indeed seen an excellent *M. S. S.* where this odious opinion, which has made our *Church*

is solidly rejected; till such time as that become publick, these few Arguments I have pitched upon, may be of use to convince us that Mr. *Gale* is in a mistake.

I should now have proceeded to the consideration of those Arguments he brings in defence of his opinion, but I find this will be more pertinent afterwards, when a more fit occasion may offer.

Now to conclude, it is my hearty desire that we may not, while we are disputing about the Period of our Lives, forget our Mortality. Ere it be long a Period will be put to our beings; and is it not our greatest concernment to mind this in time, that when this Life is ended we may be admitted into that glorious assembly of the Saints above, who Live, but can die no more?



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