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T H E
Moral Philosopher.
I N A
D I A L O G U E

B E T W E E N

✓
Philaethes a Christian Deist,

A N D

Theophanes a Christian Jew.

I N W H I C H

✓
T. ...

The Grounds and Reasons of RELIGION in general, and particularly of CHRISTIANITY, as distinguish'd from the Religion of Nature; the different Methods of conveying and proposing Moral Truths to the Mind, and the necessary Marks or Criteria on which they must all equally depend; the Nature of positive Laws, Rites and Ceremonies, and how far they are capable of Proof as of standing perpetual Obligation; with many other Matters of the utmost Consequence in Religion, are fairly considered, and debated, and the Arguments on both Sides impartially represented.

ELIHU in JOB xxxii. 8.

There is Reason in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth him Understanding.

The SECOND EDITION, Corrected.

L O N D O N:

Printed for the AUTHOR. MDCCXXXVIII.

T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE Author of the following Sheets, not being conscious to himself of any Malice or ill Design, is not disposed to ask any Man's Pardon. He thought he had a Right to treat his own Subject in his own Way, and would not desire to restrain the same Liberty in others. No Doubt but they who feel themselves most hurt will cry out first, and make the loudest and bitterest Complaints; but such Complaints and Outcries will be regarded by rational sober Men only in Proportion to the

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Merits of the Cause. And, as for such as may think the Argument itself injurious to them, if they cannot right and defend themselves in the same Way, no wise Man would pity them how much so ever they might suffer; but if they can make Reprizals in such an honourable War, the Author would never repine at his Lot, but chearfully submit to the keenest Revenges of Truth and Reason; and even be always ready to own the great Advantage and Honour of being thus conquered. But if in attempting to serve the Cause of Virtue and true Religion, he has mis'd his Aim, he has however at the same Time put it into the Power of his Adversaries, by setting him right, to lay him under the strongest Obligations of Gratitude and Respect.

It may be necessary here to return Thanks to those Gentlemen who have lately made the best Defence of Christianity against the Deists: Their Attempts to rescue Christianity from the
Dark,

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Darkness of Enthusiasm, and the Uncertainty of every private Imagination, are highly laudable. Their resting Religion and all its Doctrines and Obligations upon the moral Truth, Reason, and Fitness of Things, is placing it upon the only true Foundation, and where alone it can be secure and defensible. But it must be own'd, however, and every one sees, that most of these Gentlemen, notwithstanding their Impartiality, have given but very little Satisfaction to such Judaizing Christians as would still retain at least some Things merely positive, ritual and ceremonial, as necessary Parts of Religion, or necessary instituted Means of conveying Grace, without any moral Reason, Fitness, or Congruity in the Things themselves. And indeed, an Attempt to connect any Actions in themselves indifferent, with the moral Truth, Reason and Fitness of Things, as standing perpetual Obligations, is in effect giving up the whole Cause, and leaving Religion without

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any certain Mark or Criterion at all. And therefore the Christian Judaizers have always thought themselves abused and trifled with, by all the Concessions which such Friends of Liberty and rational Religion seem to make in their Favour. They take it as mere Grimace, and a Contrivance only to save Appearances. These Gentlemen, say they, pretend to support the positive, ritual and ceremonial Part of Religion, while they believe nothing of the Matter. They affect Solemnity chiefly when they are least serious; and while they seem to allow the Necessity, or at least Usefulness of positive Institutions, they are in effect explaining them away, and leaving every Man to his Liberty whether he will observe them or not, or to a Judgment of Discretion how far he is to submit to such Obligations; which is, say they, plainly setting aside the Obligations, and leaving the positive Laws of God to be obey'd or disobey'd, according to every Man's Judgment, Will, or Fancy.

This

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This is now the Case, and 'tis what we may call the prudential Part of Religion. But 'tis to be hoped, that the Time will come, when Men of liberal Education, Catholick Principles and free Enquiry, will have no such Obstacles in their Way, as the Bigottry, Superstition, and Enthusiasm of the lowest and weakest of the People. And even now, there are but few among the Populace, who think and reason at all, or who have not receiv'd their Faith by Inheritance and legal Descent, but begin to see the Weakness and Absurdity of that systematical Orthodoxy and Church Authority, which have been generally made the Test and Standard of Christianity and true Religion.

But I am here authoriz'd to inform the Reader, that the Foundation of these Conferences was laid many Years ago, by a Society, or Club of Gentlemen in the Country, who met once a Fortnight at a Gentleman's House in a pleasant retired Village, with a Design to enter impartially into the Con-

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fidertion of the Grounds and Principles of Religion in general, and particularly of Christianity as a Revelation distinct from the Religion of Nature. These Debates and Conferences were continued regularly for almost two Years, till some of the principal Members were providentially placed at too great a Distance; but during their Enquiries and Debates, the following Principles and Positions were agreed on, as true and defensible against all the Objections that could be then urged or thought of.

1. The moral Truth, Reason and Fitness of Actions is founded in the natural and necessary Relations of Persons and Things, antecedent to any positive Will or Law, and therefore cannot be altered by any positive Will, Law, or Authority whatever.

2. The moral Truth, Reason, or Fitness of Things is the only certain Mark or Criterion of any Doctrine as coming from God, or as making any Part of true Religion.

3. The

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3. The extraordinary Powers and Gifts in the Apostolick Age were never confin'd or annex'd to any moral Character, but the false Prophets and Teachers had them as well as the true; and therefore there was the same Reason and Necessity for Mens examining and trying all Doctrines and all Pretensions to Prophecy, by the moral Truth, Reason and Fitness of Things then, as now.

4. Infallibility and Impeccability are the sole Prerogative and peculiar Attributes of God. Every Being not omniscient must be liable to, or capable of Error, and every wilful or voluntary Error in moral Conduct is faulty or sinful; and consequently the extraordinary Gifts and Powers so common in the Apostolick Age, did not make Men infallible or impeccable, as they did not destroy natural Liberty or free Agency; but they who were endued with them might make either a good or bad Use of them, as much as of any natural Faculties or Talents.

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5. The Doctrines and Obligations of moral Truth and Righteousness may be conveyed and proposed to the Mind in several different Ways; *ſc.* by Reason, in the natural ordinary Use of our Faculties; by Inspiration, or immediate personal Revelation from God; or, lastly, by authentick Testimony from those who were thus originally enlightened and supernaturally assisted. But in whichever of these Ways the Doctrines may be conveyed and proposed, the Religion is still the same, and its Evidence or Proof the same; namely, the moral Truth, Reasonableness and Fitness of the Doctrines themselves, as appearing to the Understanding, upon a fair, impartial Consideration and Judgment of Reason. If this be not allow'd, there can be no true and certain Marks or Bounds of Religion, but the grossest Errors and most diabolical Delusions might be receiv'd as divine Truths.

These were the Principles upon which the Gentlemen before-mentioned proceeded

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ceeded in their Debates and Inquiries, and in which they came to so good an Agreement. How the Subject of these Conferences came to be so long delay'd and set aside, or from what Occasion and Motives they are permitted to appear now, would not be worth the Reader's while to know. I shall only say, that I have taken the Liberty to represent Things in my own Way, tho' with very little Variation from the Method in which the Argument was at first managed and carried on.

And now to conclude; whatever Fate these Papers may meet with in the World, one Thing is pretty sure, that the Silversmiths will be all in an Uproar for *Diana*, and *Religion* will be the Word, while they mean nothing but their *Sbrines*. But tho' I am determined to defend myself upon all reasonable and proper Occasions, yet there are two Sorts of Adversaries against whom I must except, and am resolved never to contend with; and that is either such as by a mere feign'd Opposition

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position give up the main Points in Debate; or those who will grant nothing at all for fear of granting too much: Both these will be let pass as inoffensive, since the one only betray their Craft, and the other their Ignorance, while both equally dread the Argument, and would bring it to no Issue. But the fair Adversary will be ever esteemed and regarded by the

Moral Philosopher.

A
DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

PHILALETHES a Christian DEIST,

AND

THEOPHANES a Christian JEW.

Philal. **W**HAT! my good old Friend, dear *Theophanes!* — I rejoice to see you, especially so early in the Morning. I had devoted this Day to a certain Chronological Amusement, but now I am like to be better entertain'd.

Theoph. You are always, *Philalethes*, extremely civil to your Friends, and can make yourself easy in very indifferent Company; but
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as I come to trouble you with some Things, that sit very heavy on my Mind, I wish our present Conference may not in the Issue give you more Pain than Pleasure.

Philal. I must, indeed, enjoy or suffer with you as a Friend, and can receive Pleasure only in Proportion to the Service I may be able to do you; but, pray, without farther Ceremony, let me know the Difficulties you are under, or the Ground of your present Uneasiness.

Theoph. Why, Sir, to be short and plain with you, the present Growth of *Deism* gives me more Pain than I can express to you. Had this Malady only infected our Rakes and pretty Fellows, Men of little Sense and less Virtue, it would not have much affected me; but the Sore lies deeper, and the Malignity seems to spread itself thro' the whole Body, among Persons of all Ranks, Qualities and Characters. Nay, I find some Men who are really exemplary for their Sobriety, Benevolence, and all the social Virtues, who yet take a Liberty of talking about Religion that is perfectly surprizing, and too plainly discover themselves to be no great Friends if not real Enemies to Christianity; and to tell you the plain Truth, Sir, nothing has shock'd me more, or given me greater Uneasiness than what I heard the other Day from a common Friend of ours, who had lately the Favour of some free Conversation with you, that he doubted *Philalethes* himself might be a little, or perhaps not a little tainted with *Deism*.

Philal.

Philal. It is not impossible, *Theophanes*, but this modern Controversy which has given you such Apprehensions may, like most others, be very much about Words of an indeterminate or no Signification; in my Opinion, we are not well agreed about the Meaning of the Words, *Deism*, *Christianity*, *Revelation*, *Inspiration*, &c. And to make a Trial of this in the Case before us, I should be glad to know what you mean by *Christianity*, or *reveal'd Religion*, as oppos'd to, or contradistinguish'd from the *Religion of Nature*.

Theoph. Christianity or reveal'd Religion cannot certainly be oppos'd to the Religion of Nature, but must necessarily presuppose and imply it: But what I mean by Christianity, strictly speaking, or *reveal'd* as distinguish'd from *natural* Religion, is the *reveal'd* Truths or Doctrines of Revelation, as contain'd in the Books of the *Old* and *New Testament*.

Philal. This would be a very good Criterion or Test of reveal'd Truths and Doctrines, were the Books or Writings in which they are contain'd, sufficiently clear, distinct and intelligible, so that Men of Honesty and Integrity, with a common Capacity and Attention, might easily understand, and come to an Agreement about them: But this, with Submission, is far from being the Case. The *Jews* would never admit of the Sense which the Christians have always put upon the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets; and some have thought that those *Jewish* Authors
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never had any such *Christian* Meaning, because they never expressed it. But that is not all, for the Christians themselves could never agree about the Sense of their own Revelation, but have run into as many different and contrary Parties and Schemes upon it, as Men of the most distant and opposite Religions in the World; and this too, with respect to the most important and concerning Doctrines of Revelation; what one Sect or Party determines as the true and only Sense of the Revelation, another rejects as containing no Sense at all; what one maintains as fundamental, necessary, and essential to Christianity, another explodes and condemns, as false, dangerous and heretical: And this is not barely a Confusion and Uncertainty occasioned by the Lusts, Passions and Prejudices of Men; for tho' that may be often the Case, and Men from some corrupt Bias, or carnal Interest, may resist the strongest Evidence, and oppose even Demonstration itself, yet we see that the most learned, impartial and diligent Inquirers, after all their Pains and Researches, are not able to come to an Agreement about the most important Points of mere Revelation; the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Pre-existence of Christ from the Beginning, or before all Time, as a Being superior to all Angels, Principalities and Powers, by whom God made and governs the Worlds; his Incarnation and miraculous Conception in the Womb of a Virgin, and the Necessity of his

Death as a Sacrifice of Propitiation or Atonement for Sin; these Doctrines are the most considerable Parts of the Christian Revelation, and must therefore be of as great Consequence as any Points of mere Revelation; and yet you must know that they are very differently explain'd and understood by the most learned, honest and careful Inquirers; nay, perhaps it is hardly possible for any two thinking inquisitive Men to form the same Opinion and Judgment about them: What then is that reveal'd Religion, which you would distinguish from Deism, or the Religion of Nature? What are its most peculiar and important Doctrines, or the Fundamentals of Revelation? And what is the true, determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost, or of the sacred, inspired Writers, concerning each of these Doctrines?

Theoph. You ask, indeed, a very hard Question, and I do not think the infallible Decision of it to be at all necessary: I could only give you my own Opinion about such Matters, which perhaps might not be the same with yours, nor could I be accountable for it that I am not myself mistaken.

- *Philal.* None of the Doctrines of Revelation, therefore, can be fundamental or necessary, because Mistakes in such a Case are easily made, and may be unavoidable; nay, no Man can ever be certain that he understands the true, determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost, or the inspired Writers, concerning such supernatural Truths and Doctrines, which are delivered in

ambiguous Terms, and cloth'd with Expressions capable of very different Constructions.

Theoph. All that can be necessary in this Case is for Men to study the Scriptures with Impartiality and Care, and to believe the Doctrines of Revelation in the Sense, which shall appear true to them after an honest Inquiry.

Philal. But, after such an Inquiry, Men of different Reach, Capacity and Talents must needs think differently, or understand the same verbal Propositions in different Senses; that is, they must believe different Doctrines concerning the same Thing, all of which cannot, and none of them may be, the true Sense of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. The Doctrines, doubtless, consist in the Sense, and not in the verbal Propositions abstracted from their Meaning. And therefore if two Men believe the Doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, Christ's Satisfaction, &c. in different Senses, they really believe different Doctrines about the same Thing: But is it not strange, that God should reveal a Religion as of any Necessity or Use to Mankind, which is not to be understood in any one certain determinate Sense, but may be taken in as many different Senses as there are different Capacities, Apprehensions and Ways of Thinking among Men? This, surely, could not in any Propriety of Speech be call'd *a Religion*, but must be a vast Number of Religions, perhaps, almost as many as there are Men: And this shews how much the Word Religion is abused, whenever it is apply'd to such abstract, intricate
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and mere speculative Points, which Men may believe or not believe, which they may think differently of, or not think of at all, without affecting their moral Character. But, not to press you farther with this, I would here only ask, whether the Christian Revelation is contain'd in the Books of the *Old Testament*, or whether *Moses* and the Prophets understood and taught the reveal'd Doctrines of Christianity?

Theoph. Not, indeed, clearly, explicitly and literally; but darkly, obscurely and under Types and Shadows.

Philal. Literal *Judaism* then, it seems, was figurative Christianity, and literal Christianity is mystical *Judaism*; the Letter of the Law was the Type of the Gospel, and the Letter of the Gospel is the Spirit of the Law; the Law was the Gospel under a Cloud; and the Gospel is the Law unveil'd and farther illuminated; *Moses* was the Shadow of Christ, and Christ is the Substance of *Moses*: But tho' this Sort of Connexion and Harmony between the Law and the Gospel, or between the *Old Testament* and the *New*, may give intire Satisfaction and appear perfectly just and beautiful to Men of deep Discernment and Penetration; yet it must, as I imagine, be a little puzzling to vulgar Understandings.

Theoph. It is an easy Matter for a Man who will indulge himself in this Sort of Humour, to laugh at and ridicule any Thing in the World. I am sensible that this Way of Talking is somewhat natural to you, and can therefore

make all proper Allowances for it; but then I must venture to say, that treating a serious Subject in a ludicrous Manner, is not just or natural. *St. Paul*, I believe, was a Man of very good Sense and great Abilities, to say nothing of his Revelations or Inspiration from God; and yet he was not ashamed to suppose and maintain this figurative and typical Resemblance, Relation or Connexion between the Law and the Gospel. That Apostle, it must be own'd, hath said many Things harsh enough of the Law; but yet he never takes Liberty to treat that important Subject in the Way of Wit and Humour; and I should think so great an Example worthy of Imitation.

Philal. I seriously ask your Pardon, my good Friend, if I have made too free with your Temper. I cannot well help speaking of Things as they appear to me, whether in a grave and gloomy, or in a pleasant and gay Light. If some Things are ridiculous in themselves, I cannot see why they may not be considered and treated as they are. When a Man places the Ridicule wrong, it must certainly recoil upon himself; but whenever it sticks where it is laid, it must always be just. Nothing can be odd or absurd, but what is unreasonable; and whoever attempts to ridicule Truth, especially moral Truth, must make himself ridiculous. But this Tenderness, *Theophanes*, is not commonly for Truth, but for Persons, who are sometimes so very serious or vain, that their Opinions must be spared in Point of Civility, at the Expence
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of Truth: This might be expected from a Man who being wedded to his Opinions by Interest, and having taken them to have and to hold, for better and for worse, is resolv'd never to part with them, and is therefore ready to resent any Thing that can be said against these his espoused and darling Idols, as an Affront offered to himself; but why a Man, who is really and sincerely concern'd for Truth, should not be willing to put it to any Test against Error, I cannot imagine. For what relates to *St. Paul*, I can assure you, Sir, that I have as good an Opinion of him as you can have, and shall willingly abide by the Judgment and Sense of that great Apostle in the present Debate between us. It is true, that *St. Paul*, as well as all the Prophets before him, found himself obliged to treat the *Jews* in a very grave and solemn Manner; for that People being naturally reserv'd, fullen, morose and severe, could not bear any Thing of Wit and Humour, and would certainly have return'd a Jest or a Piece of Wit upon them, with a Dart or a Javelin. The Prophet *Elisba*, we find, smartly lashes the Priests of *Baal*, as the blind Worshipers of a deaf and dumb God; and their other Prophets frequently expose the Absurdities of the Heathen Idolatry, in this Way of Wit and Humour; but they never durst attack the Vices or Follies of their own People in such a Manner. *David* was undoubtedly the great Master of Poetry and Politeness in *Israel*; but we find the royal Prophet grave

and severe in all his Compositions as well as Actions, and we never hear of his Jestings but once, when he made a Jest of himself by dancing naked before the Lord among the Daughters of *Israel*, and uncovering that which his Modesty ought to have conceal'd: This was doubtless a merry Action, which he as merrily excused to his Wife, by ascribing it to his Zeal for the Lord, and in the same Humour resolv'd never to lie with her more, because she could not approve of this warm Zeal for the Lord among the Women. See 2 *Sam.* vi 20—23.

Theoph. Well, Sir, you must take your own Way, I shall attend the Argument, and not think myself much concern'd with the Wit. I have no Opinions but what I can readily part with upon any reasonable Conviction that they are wrong; and as I can easily stand the Test of your Railery, so I am not yet greatly apprehensive of the Reasoning upon your Side of the Question. I am glad however to find you have so good an Opinion of *St. Paul*, and hope that great Apostle, before we have done with him, may bring you into a better Opinion of *Moses* and the Prophets. I think your Observation concerning *David*, is extremely severe, if not unjust. I cannot say, indeed, that the Place you refer to may not possibly bear the Construction you put upon it; but this I am sure of, that it might as well bear a more candid Interpretation. But, whatever *David* might do in his dancing, I find you and I must
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fight naked, and take the rough Argument upon the bare Skin: And seeing you are thus hardy, I shall only stand upon the Defensive, and endeavour to bear off the Edge as well as I can; this however you may observe by the Way, that he who is resolv'd to cut, must sometimes lay himself open, and Arguments thus pointed ought to be very well guarded, lest the Satyre, as you say, should recoil. But this is all beside the Purpose, 'tis high Time to come to the Argument, and I shall be glad to know how far you would carry this Matter, and what it is that you will undertake to prove.

Philal. The Question then to be debated between us, if you please, shall be this, Whether the positive and ceremonial Law of *Moses*, commonly call'd the *Levitical* Law, or the Law concerning their Priesthood, was originally a divine Institution or Revelation from God, to be afterwards nullify'd, abolish'd and set aside by another Revelation; or, whether it was originally a mere Piece of carnal, worldly Policy? This latter Part of the Question, is what I would maintain against the former, which, I presume, you will think fit to abide by, at least, as long as you can.

Theoph. And that, I believe, will be as long as I live, unless I should live to see another *Revelation*; for while the present stands as it is, you are never like to carry your Point. I thought you would have undertaken to prove something in which *St. Paul* might have as-

sisted you; but here, I think, you bid an open and bold Defiance to that Apostle in the very Proposition you have made yourself accountable for. I hope you will deal openly and fairly in this Argument, as between one Friend and another; and not make an Advantage to yourself of any Superiority of Learning, Reading, or polemical Skill, to confound my Understanding, and perplex the Argument. I can see no other Aim you can have, in setting *St. Paul* against *Moses*, but to get rid of them both; and when once you have thrown the *Jewish Legislator* out of your System, I doubt the *Christian Apostle* will have no Reason to expect a much better Fate.

Philal. Perhaps you may be mistaken in this; but however that may be, I must declare myself of another Opinion. I can assure you, in the Name of Truth and Friendship, that I have no Interest, Aim at Victory, or any other sinister Design in View; and if I cannot make it appear that *St. Paul* (when he comes to be rightly understood) is plainly on my Side, I will give up the Argument.

Theoph. Well, *Philaethes*, this is, I must own, a very extraordinary *Undertaking*; and when you have succeeded in it, and made good your Point; I shall call it an extraordinary *Performance*.

Philal. I should be proud, Sir, of deserving your Approbation; but before I enter upon the Argument, it will be necessary to observe here, that *St. Paul* in his Writings makes use
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of the Word *Law* in three very different and distinct Senses or Acceptations. For, in the first Place, he sometimes by the *Law*, means the Law of *Nature*, as originally written upon the Heart; or that universal, eternal and immutable Wisdom, Reason, moral Truth or Righteousness, which being objectively proposed to the Understanding, must be the same Rule or Measure of Action to every intelligent Being alike; and when this universal, immutable Wisdom, Reason or moral Truth, is follow'd and complied with, as the Will and Law of God, the supreme Being, and the most powerful, wise and righteous Creator and Governor of the World, it then constitutes what we call the Religion of Nature, which is every where and at all Times the same, as much as God himself. This, according to St. *Paul*, was the Law, Rule or Measure of Action, from which Mankind in general, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, had fallen and revolted, and to which they were to be again restored by the Grace or Favour of God, manifested in the Gospel by *Jesus Christ*; which Grace or Manifestation of Truth, teacheth Men to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to practise Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness in the World: This is that *Law of Faith*, or *Law of Righteousness*, by which the *New Man* or *New Creature* was to be formed, directed and governed under the Gospel Dispensation, in Opposition to all those carnal Motives, and worldly, temporary Views, by which Men had
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been influenced and governed before. This is that Law which remain'd written in Nature, as a standing Witness and Testimony for God and true Religion, even among the *Gentiles*, under all their gross Idolatry, Ignorance and moral Wickedness; in consequence of which they were forced either to acquit or condemn themselves, their own Consciences excusing or accusing them, in Spite of all the Magick, Miracles and pretended Revelations of their Priests to the contrary. But, secondly, *St. Paul* by the Word *Law*, sometimes means the *Moral Law* given by *Moses* to the People of *Israel*, as the Civil or political Law of that *Nation*: And, in this Sense, the Apostle declares the Law to be holy, just and good; he speaks of it as a *School-Master* to lead us to *Christ*; or, a Constitution wisely adapted to prepare and dispose Men for a more complete and perfect Dispensation of moral Truth and Righteousness under the Gospel. But then he declares the Law as thus considered, to have been weak, imperfect and defective, as neither proposing sufficient Motives, nor affording sufficient Aids to a complete State of Virtue and true Religion: This is what *St. Paul* often mentions and largely insists upon in his Writings, and the Reasons of this Weakness and Insufficiency of the Moral Law, as deliver'd by *Moses*, are very obvious. For, as this Law was barely Civil, Political or National, so all its Sanctions were merely Temporal, relating only to Mens outward Practice and Behaviour in Society,

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none of its Rewards or Punishments relating to any future State, or extending themselves beyond this Life: All the Sanctions of this Law were such as could be dispensed by Men, under a human Jurisdiction and Cognizance; or else such as being awarded by God himself in temporal Prosperity or Adversity, might be seen and judged of by the whole Society. Now 'tis evident, that a Law thus constituted could only extend to outward Actions, and thereby secure Civil Virtue, and the Civil Rights and Properties of the Society, against such Fraud or Violence as might fall under a human Cognizance; but could not relate to the inward Principles and Motives of Action, whether good or bad, and therefore could not purify the Conscience, regulate the Affections, or correct and restrain the vitious Desires, Inclinations and Dispositions of the Mind. And this is what *St. Paul* means, as often as he declares the Weakness or Insufficiency of this Law to enforce, or secure a State of inward, real Virtue or Righteousness, with respect to God and Conscience. And, as this Law could only reach the outward Practice and Behaviour of Men in Society, so it was very defective even in that, as providing no sufficient Remedy against any such Immoralities, Excesses and Debaucheries, in which a Man might only make a Fool or a Beast of himself, without directly hurting his Neighbour or injuring the Society. Nay, the Obligations of the Law, with respect to this Civil
or

or Social Virtue, extended no farther than to the Members of that Society; that is, to those who were either of the natural Seed of *Abraham*, or such as by Profelytism were incorporated with them, and allow'd to live among them. But, tho' they were obliged to live in Peace and Amity with one another, or within themselves, yet they were put into a State of War with all the rest of the World; they were not only left at Liberty, but encouraged and directed by *Moses* himself to extend their Conquests as far as they could, and to destroy by Fire and Sword, any or every Nation or People that resisted them, and that would not submit to become their Subjects and Tributaries, upon Demand: The Inhabitants of *Canaan* were to be utterly destroy'd Root and Branch without Mercy, not sparing or leaving alive Man, Woman or Child. But, with regard to their farther Conquest of other Nations, for which they were design'd, and for which their Plan of Government was contriv'd, their Commission from *Moses* ran thus; When they came into any Country, without, or beyond the Borders of *Canaan*, to make War upon it and to conquer it, they were first to offer them Terms of Peace and Accommodation; in which the Lives of the People were to be spared, upon Condition of their becoming Subjects and Tributaries to these generous Conquerors; but in Case of Refusal, they were to put all the Males to the Sword, to take the Women

men to themselves as Slaves, Captives or Prisoners of War, and to seize upon all their Wealth and Property, Goods and Cattle, as the lawful Plunder of the conquering Army, *Deut.* xx. 10—18. Thus it is evident, that the People of *Israel*, upon the very Constitution of the Law and fundamental Principles of *Moses*, were not to maintain any Peace or Amity with any other Nation or People, but on Condition of submitting to them as their Subjects, Slaves and Tributaries, under such Terms as they should think fit to impose. And thus narrow, defective and imperfect was even the moral Part of this Law, with regard both to its Precepts and Sanctions. But then, in the last Place, the Apostle by the Word *Law* frequently understands the ritual, ceremonial Law of *Moses*, or the legal Constitution of their Priesthood. And in this Sense he is always to be understood, where he absolutely rejects and condemns the Law as *carnal, worldly and deadly*, and speaks of it with Contempt as the *Law of Ordinances, beggarly Elements* and the *Rudiments of this World*, which in its original, proper and literal Sense, had neither any Thing of Truth or Goodness in it, but a blinding, enslaving Constitution, and such an intolerable Yoke of Darkness and Bondage, Tyranny and Vassalage, Wrath and Misery, that neither they nor their Fathers were ever able to bear it. This Apostle therefore, though he had been born and educated a *Jew*, endeavours to set aside the Law as thus considered, under the Notion of its having been only

only a *Figure* of better Things to come, which was now to be null'd and abrogated by the Christian Dispensation. He represents Christ as the only High-Priest, who was to continue for ever, and his Death as the only true and effectual Sacrifice for Sin, by which all other Sacrifices were to cease and to be done away for ever. This was plainly *St. Paul's* Account of the *Jewish* Law, as respecting their Sacrifices and Priesthood; and how he could declare all this with any Notion or Belief of the ritual, ceremonial Law and Priesthood as a divine Institution, or a Revelation from God, I should be glad to know.

Theoph. I have heard you, as you may have observ'd, with great Patience and Attention; and I must own that your Distinction of the several different Senses or Acceptations in which *St. Paul* uses the Word *Law*, has given me some farther Light, and may serve to reconcile and conciliate several Disputes and Controversies, which have arisen among Christians of different Parties and Denominations. But yet you must give me leave still to suppose, that you have not yet clear'd the main Difficulty, and that you must, after all, either acquit *Moses* as a faithful Servant of God, or condemn *St. Paul* as a Dissembler and a Betrayer of the Truth. *St. Paul*, indeed, speaks of the ritual, ceremonial Law and *Jewish* Priesthood in the same diminutive and contemptible Terms as you have observ'd: But then, how does he do this, or in what View does he consider the

Law when he thus speaks of it? Why, I think plainly, in the gross, mistaken Sense of the *Jews*, who took it for a Law of perfect Righteousness, or as the Means of their Acceptance and Justification with God. In this Sense, and this Sense only, the Apostle rejects and condemns the Law, and gives it all the opprobrious Characters and Epithets which you have mentioned. I agree with you that the Law of *Moses*, with respect both to the moral and ceremonial Part of it, is to be understood and consider'd only as the national, political or civil Law of *Israel*, and as such it might be very well and wisely adapted to the Temper, Genius and Circumstances of that People; and consequently might be a divine Institution, and every Way worthy of God, the Author of it, at that Time, and under these Circumstances; tho' it never was intended as a Law of perfect Righteousness, or a complete System of Religion, with respect to Conscience and the Interests of another World. Now, this being so, *St. Paul* might reject and condemn the Law in this mistaken Sense of it, without condemning *Moses*, or setting up a *new* Revelation in Opposition to the *old*.

Philal. I think you have here offered the Sum of what has been or may be said in Favour of the common Hypothesis, and most prevailing Scheme among Christians. But you confound several Things, which ought to be more distinctly considered, and take other Things for granted, which will not be easily admitted without farther Proof. And, in the first

first Place, I would ask you, What Distinction there could be, under the *Mosaick* Theocracy, between *Religion* and *civil Law*, where God himself was in both Cases the sole Legislator; or whether, according to the Constitution of *Moses*, *Religion* and *Law* were not both one and the same Thing? In the next Place, I would ask you, Whether you can find any Reason or Foundation in all the Writings of *Moses*, or his Commentators the Prophets, for that typical, figurative and allegorical Sense of the legal Priesthood, Sacrifices and Ceremonies, which *St. Paul* supposes and argues upon in his Reasonings against the *Jews*, in order to set aside this Priesthood and the Law of Ceremonies depending upon it, as fulfill'd and accomplish'd in *Christ*? And, lastly, give me leave to ask, Whether God can establish Iniquity by Law, or whether a Law, which in *St. Paul's* Opinion, introduced and confirm'd a State of civil and religious Blindness and Bigottry, Tyranny and Slavery, could, in the same Judgment, have been originally a divine Institution, and an immediate Revelation from God?

Theoph. I think we are now got into the Heat of the Battle; you charge me home, and I expect no Quarter. But yet, under the Indulgence of your Patience, and with Submission to better Judgment, I hope to take off the Edge of your Arguments in such a Manner, as not to condemn *Moses* any farther than you yourself must be obliged to condemn *St. Paul*. You must suffer me, *Philaletbes*, to
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hold you strictly to this Point, I have certainly a Right to it, as it was your own Proposal.

Philal. I am content, I take you upon no other Terms, and you may therefore go on in the Name of Truth and Goodness.

Theoph. In Answer then to your first Demand, I think, that under the *Mosaick* OEconomy, there might be, and really was a just and necessary Distinction between *Religion* and *Civil Law*, or which is the same Thing, between internal and external Religion. And this Distinction both *Moses* himself, and his Commentators the Prophets, made and kept up all along, as much as *St. Paul* did afterwards. It is true, indeed, that the Law of *Moses*, as a national, civil Law, could only extend to Mens outward Practice, as Members of Society, and could take no direct Notice of the inward Principles and Motives of Action, as not being liable to a human Jurisdiction. But then, I say, that *Moses* and the Prophets always supposed an inward, right Motive, or the Principle and Disposition of Love to God and our Neighbour, as necessary to constitute the true Morality and Religion of an Action with respect to God and Conscience. And thus, tho' an external, civil Virtue, or beneficent Behaviour in Society, might intitle Men to the civil Rewards and temporal Advantages of the Law; yet this, without inward, right Motives and Principles of Action,

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tion, could never denominate them truly good Men, or make them perfect and upright in the Sight of God. And, tho' the *Mosaick* Constitution, as a national, civil Law, could not take in the inward Motives and Principles of Action, but confin'd its legal, temporal Sanctions to such outward Practice as might fall under a human Cognizance and Jurisdiction; yet it is evident, that the Lawgiver himself had a farther View, and directed the People to the right Motive and Principle of Action, *i. e.* to the inward, sincere Love of God and their Neighbour, as the End of the Law, and the principal Thing that would be regarded in the Sight of God. See *Deut.* vi. 5. *Levit.* xix. 18. That this inward, spiritual Principle of Obedience, as necessary to a State of true Religion and Virtue, was all along understood and insisted on during the legal OEconomy, might be proved from innumerable Testimonies out of the Law and the Prophets; but I shall here content myself with only mentioning two or three more. The first shall be that famous Passage in the Prophet *Micah*, Chap. vi. 5—8. where we find a Quotation from the Discourse which passed between *Balak* King of *Moab*, and *Balaam* the Prophet, whom the King had sent for to curse the People of *Israel*, and enable him to drive them out of his Territories. The King having offered the Prophet vast Rewards, if he could deliver him from this Calamity,

lamity, asks him what he should do to recommend himself to the Favour of the great God, and to get rid of this numerous and devouring People. *Wherewith, saith he, shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings, and with Carves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, or the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* To whom the Prophet, *i. e. Balaam*, replies, *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Here the Prophet, in the King's great Distress and terrible Apprehensions from the Presence of a conquering, desolating Enemy, gives this excellent Advice, to humble himself before God, and to govern and direct all his Actions by the Love of Justice and Mercy, as the only Means to obtain the Favour of God, and secure the divine Protection to himself and People. That this is a Quotation from *Balaam* in his Answer to *Balak*, is, I think, plain from the Text, tho' this Passage in all our present Copies is now lost. To the same Purpose we find throughout the Book of *Psalms*, that when *David* had committed any great and grievous Offence, and thereby incurr'd God's Displeasure, he had no Dependence upon Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings,

ferings, or any of the outward, ritual Observances of the Law; but acknowledges the absolute Necessity of cleansing his Heart, purifying his Conscience, and putting away his Sin in the very Habit and Disposition of it. And 'tis evident, that the Prophets all along under the *Mosaick* Dispensation, were Preachers of Righteousness to that People, as *Noah* had been to the old World; and that they constantly declared the Vanity and utter Insufficiency of Sacrifices, and all the outward Observances of the Law, without a strict Regard to and Love of Truth, Justice and Mercy; and even in our Saviour's Time the *Jews*, from the highest to the lowest, own'd the Obligation, and could not stifle their Convictions of it, how much soever they had lost or neglected the Practice. Their most learned Men, and Christ's greatest Enemies, allow'd, that to love God above all, and our Neighbour as ourselves, was the Sum and Substance, the End and Design of the whole Law. See *Mark* xii. 28—33. *Luke* x. 25—28. And it was this Doctrine which struck the common People with such strong Convictions, and convey'd our Saviour's Discourses to their Hearts and Consciences with so much Efficacy and Power; a plain Proof that internal Religion was understood and own'd by them from the highest to the lowest, tho' not much practis'd; and even own'd as the great End and Design of the whole Law. This, I think, is an Answer to your first Question, What Distinction there could be under the Law
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of *Moses*, between *Religion* and Civil Law. Your second Question seems to me a little extraordinary, considering the Concessions you have made, and your Promise in this Case to abide by St. *Paul's* Sense and Judgment. For you ask, whether there can be any Reason or Foundation in all the Writings of *Moses*, or his Commentators the Prophets, for that typical, figurative and allegorical Sense of the legal Priesthood, Sacrifices and Ceremonies, which St. *Paul* supposes and argues upon in his Reasonings against the *Jews*, in order to set aside this Priesthood, and the Law of Ceremonies depending upon it, as fulfill'd and accomplish'd in Christ? Now, I think, that St. *Paul's* Judgment and Authority, which you declare yourself ready to abide by in this Case, is an evident Proof, that the ceremonial Law had originally such a typical and figurative Sense or Reference to Christ and the Gospel Dispensation, tho' for want of a clearer Revelation, perhaps *Moses* and the Prophets might not sufficiently understand it; and this might be the Reason why they say so little of it. But since, as it is plain, St. *Paul* takes up with this typical and figurative Sense of the Law, and argues from it, you must either admit of this Construction, or quit that Apostle's Authority, and at the same Time make him a very inconsistent and injudicious Writer; which yet, as I imagine, he was not. As to your third Question, I think I have answered it already, That St. *Paul* did not censure or condemn the ceremonial Law in itself, or as

instituted by God, with a due Relation to the Circumstances of that People; but only under that false mistaken Sense in which the *Jews* had understood it, as a Law of perfect Righteousness, and the proper Means or Justification with God; which Purpose it could not possibly answer, and for which it was never intended, as the Apostle largely proves.

Philal. You see, *Theophanes*, that I can exercise Patience as well as you. It is always agreeable enough to me to hear a Man of Sense and Learning make the best even of a bad Cause. But, as I have heard you out, you must grant me the same Indulgence in replying to the several Parts of your Argument, as you have here represented the Matter. I entirely approve of your Distinction between external and internal *Religion*, as very just and natural; and I never doubted but the *Jews*, and all other Nations, ever made this Distinction. For tho' some might have less Regard to it than others, yet the Religion of Nature could never be wholly effaced on the Mind, or quite razed out of the Hearts of Men. Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* had always this eternal, immutable Law of Righteousness, or natural Rule of Rectitude to guide them, and could not help either approving or disapproving their own Actions, and excusing or accusing themselves, according to their Compliance or Non-compliance with it. But then, what you seem to suppose farther, that this Distinction between internal and external Religion, is the same with the general
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Distinction between *Religion* and *Civil Law*, I can by no Means allow, and must beg Leave to deny. I say, that under the *Mosaick* Dispensation, or *Jewish* Theocracy, there could be no Distinction between their national *Civil Law*, and their national *Establish'd Religion*, both being the same, as deliver'd by the same Lawgiver, and subjected to the same Jurisdiction and Rules of Judgment. In other States and Kingdoms the Case is very different, where their Civil Laws being only the Constitutions or Ordinances of Men, can be no farther binding upon Conscience, or in Point of Religion, than as they are agreeable to, or not inconsistent with the Laws of God. But the Law of *Moses* being supposed in all its Parts, ceremonial as well as moral, to be equally the Law of God, the People were equally obliged to comply with the Whole in Point of Religion, Conscience, or Obedience to God. That Mens observing the ritual Part of this Law could not entitle them to the Favour and Protection of God, without inward Purity and real Virtue, is very true; neither could inward Purity and Virtue give them any such Right or Title, under that Dispensation, without a strict, religious Regard to the Law of Ceremonies, as *Moses* and all the Prophets declare. Both were alike necessary, as being equally the Law of God; and one without the other, under such a Constitution, could not have been accepted or rewarded. But your great and main Observation and Objection is this, That *St. Paul* does

not condemn and explode the ceremonial Law in itself, as the Law of God, or a divine Institution; but only under that mistaken Sense, in which the *Jews* had understood it, by confounding it with the Law of Righteousness. Now, that this great Apostle did not and could not argue against the Law of Ceremonies, as the Law of God, or a divine Institution, will be readily granted; and yet, that he does actually and in Fact condemn the Law itself, and not barely the mistaken Notions of the *Jews* about it, may be as easily prov'd. Supposing *St. Paul* to have had no other Design, but to correct the Abuses and wrong Applications of the *Jewish* ritual Law, he would have brought and levied his Arguments only against those Abuses, and not have laid in his Charge so home against the Law itself, in its own intrinsic Constitution and natural Tendency, as he always does, wherever he is speaking of the ceremonial Law. It was not only the Abuses of this *Law*, but the *Law itself*, that in *St. Paul's* Language and Style, was carnal, worldly and deadly, a most intolerable Yoke, or cruel Bondage; and a Constitution that could serve only to blind and enslave those that were under it. And, this being the Case, the Apostle must doubtless be very much disappointed, to find his Countrymen still so fond of such a State of Blindness and Slavery, after they had so fair an Opportunity to part with it, and to restore themselves to the Light and Liberty of Nature and true Religion. But the

the plain Truth of the Matter was, that *St. Paul* preached a new Doctrine, contrary to *Moses* and the Prophets. And I may venture to say, that there is not one End, Use or Purpose of the ritual Law, as declared by *Moses*, but what is as directly contradicted and deny'd by this Apostle. *Moses* delivered the whole Law to the People of *Israel*, both ceremonial and moral, as from the Mouth of God himself, and as a perpetual standing Ordinance, or everlasting Constitution and Covenant between God and them throughout all their Generations, or to the End of the World: *St. Paul*, on the contrary, declares it to have been only an occasional, temporary Thing, never intended for Perpetuity, but to last only for a few Ages. *Moses*, in the most direct, positive and express Terms, often repeated throughout his whole Law, establishes Propitiations and Atonements for Sin, by the Blood of Beasts, and declares that upon the Action of the Priest in sprinkling the sacrificial Blood, the Atonement should be made and the Offence forgiven; and accordingly he ordains daily Sacrifices, and annual sacrificial Feasts for the Sins of the whole People, and this without any the least Hint or Intimation of any Type or farther Reference: But *St. Paul*, on the contrary, declares it as impossible for the Blood of Bulls and Goats to take away Sin; and condemns this literal Sense of the Law, as a Scheme of natural Blindness and Bondage, that cannot consist either with the civil or religious Rights and
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and Liberties of Mankind. *Moses* commands all Idolatry to be exterminated by Fire and Sword, not only in *Canaan*, but all the rest of the World, so far as his People should have it in their Power; of which, tho' he was very confident, yet he was not certain: But *St. Paul* strictly forbids all Wars, Commotions and Violence upon this Account; he declares, that every Man ought to think and judge for himself; and that Conscience, being every where alike sacred, ought to be left to the sole Force of Reason and Evidence. *Moses* instituted a Priesthood, which was to govern the Nation as prime Ministers, Representatives and Vice-gerents of God, and to drain all the Wealth and Treasures of the Kingdom into the Church; as they must necessarily have done, had his Law been strictly executed: But *St. Paul*, the great Apostle of our Religion, left the Christian Ministry to subsist only upon Charity, and obliges no body to pay them any Thing but just as they deserv'd.

Theoph. I must own that you have here been severe enough, but yet, I think, not sufficiently clear. If the Books of *Moses* had no such typical, figurative or allegorical Sense, as *St. Paul* supposes and argues upon, it must follow, that his Arguments are all inconclusive, and that he ran into this Way of Reasoning, only to impose on and delude the *Jews*. If you are in the Right, therefore, *St. Paul* must have been in the Wrong. That Christ himself, as well as *St. Paul*, undertook to justify the Gospel

pel Scheme upon the Foot of *Moses* and the Prophets, and always quoted the Books and Writings of the *Jews* against them, is as clear as Daylight, or as visible as the Books and Writings themselves. But, if these Books and Writings had really and originally no such Sense, I say, the Arguments and Reasonings built upon that Supposition, must have been all sophistical and inconclusive. And this seems so evident to me, that I shall now leave you to vindicate the Honour and Integrity of *St. Paul*, or even of *Christ* himself, in the best Manner you can.

Philal. The Question then in Debate between us is now reduced to this, How *Moses* and the Prophets should have any such typical, figurative and allegorical Sense, as is ascribed to them by *Christ* and the Apostles in the *New Testament*, when they express no such Sense, or give any the least Hint or Intimation of it in their own Writings? And, on the other Hand, How this typical, figurative and allegorical Sense came to be fix'd on them, and ascrib'd to them by the Apostle, if it was not the true, original Sense and Intention of those Authors themselves? For it looks odd, and somewhat unaccountable, that *Moses* and the Prophets should have an Intention or Meaning which they never express'd; or that *St. Paul* should charge a typical and figurative Sense upon them, which they never meant or intended.

Theoph. This is, indeed, the great Difficulty,

culty, and if you can solve this Phænomenon, you will clear up the whole Matter. But, as we are now come to the Pinch of the Argument, I hope we shall be both serious and sedate upon it. I know your Temper is somewhat warm and volatile, and that you are very apt to express yourself polemically, in Terms not very agreeable to Men of different Sentiments, However, as I converse with you under the Confidence and Trust of Friendship, and have an Opinion of your Integrity, you may talk in your own Way without displeasing me.

Philal. You almost sooth and soften me into Complacency. I could even find in my Heart to be argumentatively civil. But, as I cannot absolutely be accountable for this, I must beg your Pardon, if the Warmth of my Temper should carry me beyond the Bounds of Decency. Yet, however that may be, I shall nevertheless endeavour to solve the Difficulty before us, and then submit to your Judgment, whether I am in the Right or Wrong. Now, here I think it of great Consequence to observe, that this typical, figurative and allegorical Sense of *Moses* and the Prophets, had been never known or heard of among the *Jews*, till after their Captivities. But, from the Time of *Ezra* or *Esdras*, this figurative Interpretation of the Law and the Prophets came into Vogue, and was generally receiv'd by the Rabbi's or *Jewish* Doctors, down to our Saviour's Time, and about a
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Century lower. How this figurative, allegorical Sense and Construction of the Law came to be so generally receiv'd after the Days of *Ezra*, which had been never known or heard of before, may be a Matter of farther Inquiry: But, that it was really so in Fact, is too well known, and too plain from all the *Jewish* Antiquities, to be doubted of or denied.

Theoph. I must own that I am not sufficiently acquainted with the *Jewish* Antiquities, to judge determinately of what you here assert as a Matter of Fact; that this figurative Sense and Construction of *Moses* and the antient Prophets came in so late, and that it had never been so understood or apply'd before among them. But, if this be really so in Fact, I presume you will be able to produce some Reasons and Authorities for it, and shew how this great Revolution in Religion came about. I do not here expect that you should enter into a long Detail of History, such as could not fall within the Compass of this Debate; but I only desire your Reasons and Authorities in short, upon which you ground such an Opinion.

Philal. All the *Jewish* Books written before and since the Days of *Ezra* or *Esdras*, are so many clear Records or standing Memorials for the Truth of what I have said. The figurative, allegorical or spiritualizing Sense of the Law and the Prophets came in then, in, and after the Time of *Ezra*, and had never been known or heard of before; for which I would
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only appeal to the Books and Writings themselves, and I think there can be no fairer Appeal than this. Before the Period here fix'd, no *Jewish* Writer, Priest or Prophet had ever mentioned a Word of a Conflagration of the World by Fire, a general Resurrection and Judgment of good and bad Men, and a consequent future State of Rewards and Punishments, as the proper Sanctions and Security of Virtue and Religion is this Life: But after this Time, we find all the *Jewish* Antiquities, that are come to our Hands, about Religion and moral Conduct, full of these Doctrines, and many of them teaching these Points as plainly and expressly as the Gospels themselves. From whence, I presume, one may fairly conclude, that this great Revolution in Religion among the *Jews*, happened in the Days of *Ezra*; and that no such Doctrine, or spiritual Sense of the Law and the Prophets, had ever been known or receiv'd among that People before.

Theoph. What you say here is very surprizing, and I think unaccountable. If the *Jewish* Nation had never receiv'd any such Doctrines, as a Resurrection of the Dead, a general Judgment, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, before the Days of *Ezra*, how came they by any such Doctrines or Opinions then? For they never pretended to any new Revelation, they never confin'd themselves to the Authority of *Esdras*, and much less to any of their Doctors and great Men

Men after his Time; but always quoted *Moses* and their most antient Prophets for whatever they believ'd concerning those Doctrines, which you suppose to have been modern and new-fangled.

Philal. What you here observe is very true, that the Rabbins, Doctors or learned Men among the *Jews*, long after the Days of *Ezra*, and even in our Saviour's Time, quoted *Moses* and their most antient Prophets for the Doctrines then generally receiv'd and taught. But then, pray how did they quote them, or in what Sense did they apply them? Not in the original, proper and literal Sense of those Authors themselves; but in their own new, figurative and allegorical Sense, by which they could make them speak whatever they pleas'd.

Theoph. But, how came this new, figurative and allegorical Sense into Use after *Ezra's* Time, that had never been used or known before? Did *Esdra*s upon a new Revelation establish a new Religion?

Philal. Perhaps, if you supposed the Affirmative, you might not be much in the Wrong. But, however, the Matter may admit of some farther Explication.

Theoph. I hope so; and you who have thought so much upon this Subject, may be presumed as the likeliest Man to let us into such a Secret.

Philal. There is nothing so secret as the plainest Truths, and nothing more plain than
Mysteries.

Mysteries. How so wise, so penetrating, and so virtuous a People as the *Jews*, should be first imposed on, or rather how they should impose upon themselves, is a Mystery; and how they should afterwards come to be better informed, without discovering the Imposition, is still a greater Mystery; but how this came about, is a plain, obvious Truth, and no Mystery at all.

Theoph. I have no exorbitant Passion for Mysteries; but, I think, *Philaletbes*, that having involved yourself in such Darkness, you ought to explain *this Mystery*, that is, explain *yourself*. I believe there are such Things as Mysteries in Religion, and I find, there are mysterious Men, as well as mysterious Doctrines; but perhaps you may not distinguish between a Mystery and a Jest.

Philal. I have no Design, *Theophanes*, I can assure you, to involve myself in Darkness, to confound Truth with Falshood, or to perplex the Nature and Reason of Things. But I think it incumbent on me to shew why the *Jewish* Doctors, after the Time of *Ezra*, might expound the Law and the Prophets to the People in a figurative, allegorical Sense, which they had never done before. That this was so in Fact, that in and after the Days of *Ezra*, the *Jewish* Cabbalists, under the Pretence of an oral Tradition from *Moses*, introduced a mystical, allegorical Sense of their original Books, and under that Pretence put what Construction they pleased upon the Law

and the Prophets, which had never been known or heard of before, Dr. *Prideaux* has largely and clearly proved, to whose *History of the Old and New Testament Connected* I refer you, for farther Satisfaction in this Point, if you can be in any Doubt of it, after what he has there shewed, and what has been universally own'd by all other Antiquaries on the Christian Side, and even by the *Jews* themselves. And Dr. *Prideaux* gives a Reason for this great Change in the Sense and Construction of the original *Hebrew* Text after the Days of *Ezra*; which is this, that the common People having then lost their original Language after their Captivity, were obliged to receive both the true Reading and Sense of their antient sacred Books from their learned Doctors, the Masorites and Cabbalists: Which gave these learned Gentlemen an Opportunity to advance and propagate what Doctrines they pleased under the Authority of *Moses* and the Prophets; and because they could not pretend to support such new Doctrines, from the original, proper and literal Sense of the Text which they read and expounded; therefore they set up an oral Tradition to justify their arbitrary Interpretations, as the Papists have done since; nor did these *Jewish* Masorites and Cabbalists ever pretend to any other Authority for their new-fangled Doctrines and arbitrary Interpretations of *Moses* and the Prophets.

Theoph. But, I hope, you will not say, that Christ and the Apostles, particularly *St. Paul*, ran into these new-fangled Doctrines and arbitrary Interpretations of Scripture, or that they misunderstood and misapply'd *Moses* and the Prophets, as much as the *Jewish* Cabbalists. I can easily suppose and allow, that the *Jewish* Rabbins, Doctors or Expounders of the Law, might run into as many absurd and groundless Expositions of the Law and the Prophets as you please, and upon which they had establish'd the Traditions of their Elders, and set aside the Law and Commandments of God : But I cannot imagine, that Christ and *St. Paul* would follow them herein, or that they would espouse and retain any Thing in the Christian Scheme, but what was originally the true Sense and Intention of *Moses* and the Prophets themselves, those antient scriptural Records from whence they made their Quotations.

Philal. But do you think, that Christ and the Apostles, particularly *St. Paul*, might not argue against the *Jews* upon their own Principles, and without entering into the Merits of the Cause, endeavour to confute them in their own Way from their own Concessions? Might they not take up with the same Principles against such Men, to introduce and establish the *true Religion*, which they had made use of, and apply'd, to establish and perpetuate a *false one*? *St. Paul's* rejecting and renouncing the ceremonial Law according to the

the Letter, or in its literal Sense, when *Moses* had delivered and enforced it in no other Sense; his declaring it to be absolutely null and void, abolish'd and done away by the Death of Christ, when *Moses* had given it from God, as a perpetual standing Ordinance throughout all their Generations, or as long as they should continue a distinct separate People; and his declaring it to be a carnal, worldly, blinding and enslaving Constitution, when *Moses* had delivered it as the peculiar Favour, and distinguishing Privilege of the People of God: These, I think, are as plain Declarations as can be, that such a Law could never be of divine Institution, and consequently needed no new Revelation to set it aside, but only that People should act in such a Case upon the common Principles of Nature and Reason, by throwing off, when they had such a proper Opportunity, a national Slavery, which they had been unjustly subjected to hitherto, and could be under no Obligations to continue.

Theoph. You own, that *St. Paul* declared the *Jewish* ceremonial Law to be null'd, vacated, abolish'd and done away by the Death and Sacrifice of Christ; but did he do this without Authority from God, without any new Revelation, as you say, or without any original Ground or Foundation in the Constitution of the Law itself?

Philal. Every slavish Constitution has in itself a sufficient Reason and Foundation for setting it aside, and for Peoples asserting and re-

assuming their natural and religious Rights and Liberties, as soon as it is in their Power, and they have a proper Opportunity for it; and this is what St. *Paul* would have persuaded his Country-men to, at that Time when the *Romans* had assum'd and taken to themselves, the Power of Life and Death, and indeed, all other Jurisdiction in *Judea*, and when no Man could be try'd, convicted or condemn'd upon the Law of *Moses*. And that St. *Paul* proceeds upon this political or prudential Principle, and not upon any Revelation in that Case made to him, is plain, from his whole Conduct. That St. *Paul* in his Preaching to the *Gentiles*, and to the Dispersed among the *Jews*, throughout all the Parts of the *Roman* Empire, had set aside the Obligation of the *Jewish*, ceremonial Law, and declar'd it fulfill'd, abolish'd and done away by the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, is an agreed Point between you and me, and is a Matter too plain to be doubted of or deny'd. And it is generally believ'd and maintain'd by Christians, that he did this by a Revelation from God, and agreeably to the original Constitution, Design and Intention of the Law itself, which having been intended only as a Figure and Type of the better Things to come, *i. e.* of Christ and the Gospel Dispensation, was hereby to cease and be abolished for ever. Now whether in all this, St. *Paul* argued *ad Hominem* only against the *Jews*, as endeavouring upon political and prudential Principles to set aside

that absurd, tyrannical, blinding and enslaving Law of his Country, or whether from the Truth of Things, and on the Foot of Revelation from God, I would appeal to his own Practice, and to the Practice of all the *Jewish* Profelytes to Christianity, during this Apostle's Life-time, and above sixty Years after. Now, 'tis certain, that when St. *Paul* could not carry this Point of setting aside and abrogating the ceremonial Law, he submitted to it as long as he lived, as did all the *Jewish* Profelytes in the Apostolical Times, and for many Years afterward. Now, here lies the great Difficulty, and the Question arising upon it, is this; Upon what Principles did St. *Paul* act, while he so warmly opposes and declares against the ceremonial Law, and at the same Time submitted to and comply'd with it as long as he liv'd, as did all his *Jewish* Converts to Christianity? Had this Law been originally a *divine Institution* in the modern Sense, or a Matter of immediate Inspiration, Revelation or Command from God, it must necessarily have bound the Conscience, as a Law of Righteousness, or Means of Acceptance and Justification with God; and nothing could have dissolv'd such an Obligation, but a formal, direct Repeal and Abrogation of the Law by a new Revelation. But, that this ceremonial Law never had any such Repeal or Abrogation, is plain, from the Practice of St. *Paul* himself and all the other Apostles, with all their *Jewish* Profelytes, who continued zealous

lous of the Law and obey'd it in all its Parts, as much after their Conversion to Christianity as before. But, 'tis certain, that *St Paul* did not comply with the Law as a Law of Righteousness, or as binding the Conscience in Point of Religion and Acceptance with God, nor would he ever own or submit to any such Obligation. And this was a Point which he always stood upon, and would never depart from it, either among the *Jews* or *Gentiles*. *St. Paul*, therefore, submitted to this Law only in a civil or political Capacity, as the Law of his Country, and not as immediately, directly and in a strict Sense, the Law of God, in which Case, it must certainly have bound his Conscience in Point of Religion, justifying Righteousness or divine Acceptance. And this was the standing Controversy between *St. Paul* and the Apostles and Teachers of the Circumcision, who obey'd the Law as a Law of Righteousness, or as a necessary Part of Religion and Means of Justification with God. And they were, with great Difficulty, brought into any farther Allowances or Favour, with regard to the *Gentile* Converts. In short, *St. Paul* might have very good and justifiable Reasons for submitting to the Law of Ceremonies, in his political Capacity, as the Law of his Country, and as a Matter of human Liberty. But had he thought it an original, immediate, positive Institution from God, and afterwards null'd and abrogated by the same Authority, he could not have submitted to it, consistent with his de-

clared Judgment and Conscience. How this Matter stood in *St. Paul's* Time, and during the Apostolical Age, you may see in *Acts* xv. and xxi. The Case, in short, was this: *Paul* and *Barnabas* having for some Time preach'd the Gospel at *Antioch* and other Parts adjacent, and having converted considerable Numbers both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* to the Christian Faith, the *Jewish* Converts with great Warmth and Zeal, raised a Controversy, which had like to have stopt the Progress of Christianity in its very Beginning, and prevented any possible Coalition of *Jews* and *Gentiles* in the Christian Church. For they insisted on it, that the *Gentile* Profelytes ought to be circumcised, and obey the Law of *Moses* as much as themselves, and that without this they could not be saved, or receive any Benefit by Christ and the Gospel. *Paul* and *Barnabas* not being able to silence these Clamours, or to satisfy the two contrary and contending Parties, were sent up to *Jerusalem* by the Churches in those Parts, there to consult with the rest of the Apostles and Elders at the Fountain Head, and to make a final Decision of this Grand Question. Being come to *Jerusalem*, they report the Matter of their Embassy; upon which a general Council of all the Apostles and Elders was call'd together, in which after much Debate, they came to this Resolution, as from the Dictates of the Holy Ghost, That the *Gentile* Converts should not be obliged to be circumcised, or to obey the Law of *Moses* after the Manner

of the *Jewish* Profelytes, but only to abstain from Fornication, from Things offered to Idols, from Things strangled and from Blood; but that in other Matters they were to continue subject to the Laws of their several Countries, which were not thought inconsistent with Christianity. And this Decree was registred and sent about in circular Letters to the Churches accordingly. But this did not put an End to St. *Paul's* Troubles and Persecutions in propagating the Gospel; and indeed, that great Apostle of our Religion seems not to have been intirely satisfy'd with the Decree of the *Jerusalem* Council just now mentioned, tho' he himself had been personally present in it. For at his next Return to *Jerusalem*, not many Years after, when he had been preaching up and down in the several Towns and Cities of the *Lesser Asia*, he had a weightier Accusation brought against him, than what he had been charged with before, and from which the Apostles, Elders and Brethren then at *Jerusalem*, could not so well acquit him upon the Decree of their former Council. That Council, as I observ'd, had exempted the *Gentile* Converts from any Obligation to the *Mosaick*, ceremonial Law, and left them to the Laws of their own Countries, excepting those few necessary Things already mentioned; but they did not think fit to discharge the *Jews* upon their Profelytism from any of those ceremonial Laws, which, being the Law of their Country, they were as much bound
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by, as before their Conversion to Christianity. After this Decree of the Apostolical Council at *Jerusalem*, *St. Paul* and *Barnabas*, with *Silas* and *Judas*, or *John Mark*, were sent again into *Asia Minor*, with the circular Letters from the Council, containing their Resolutions and Decision of the Matter in Debate. They were well received at *Antioch*, *Corinth*, and other Places thereabout, and both the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Converts seem'd well satisfy'd with that Decree and resolv'd to abide by it. But as I observ'd, *St. Paul* did not seem to have been perfectly well satisfy'd with that Decree, or did not think they had gone far enough. He saw plainly that this joining of two contrary and inconsistent Religions would never do, and could serve only to continue and propagate the old Superstition and Slavery. It was clearly his Opinion, that all the Converts to Christianity without the Boundaries of *Judea*, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, ought to be exempted from any Obligation to the *Jewish*, ceremonial Law. And therefore in his preaching up and down in several Towns and Cities of the *Asiatick* and *European Greece*, he ventures to advance a new Doctrine of his own. Wherever he came into the *Jewish* Synagogues, and where there was always a mix'd Multitude of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, he endeavour'd to convince the *Jews*, that the ceremonial Law of *Moses* could be no farther binding upon any such *Jews* as should embrace Christianity, being out of the Confines of *Judea*,
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and under the Protection of other States, for that the *Jewish* Sacrifices and ceremonial Law, having been only figurative and typical of the great Christian Sacrifice, must consequently be null'd, abolish'd and done away by the Sacrifice and Death of Christ, the only true Propitiation for Sin, and consequently could be no longer obliging to the *Jews* any more than to the *Gentiles*, after they had embraced Christianity; who were now both together to form a new, spiritual Society, not under the Jurisdiction of *Moses*, but of Christ alone. That this was St. *Paul's* Doctrine in all his Epistles to, and Ministry among the foreign Churches, is too plain to be deny'd. But how he came off with it, or what the Consequences were when he came to make his Report of it to the rest of the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*, I shall now relate. This strange Doctrine, so abhorrent to the *Jews*, and so inconsistent with the Law of *Moses*, had raised such popular Uproars and Insurrections in the several Towns and Cities where the Apostle had preach'd it, that he found himself under a Necessity of repairing once more to *Jerusalem*, there to advise with the rest of the Apostles, together with the Elders and Brethren, under such an Exigence, what was farther to be done for the Propagation of the Gospel. But when he came to *Jerusalem*, he found many of the *Asiatick Jews*, who having got the Start of him, had been there and made their Report before him. These *Asiaticks* ar-
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iving before St. *Paul* had fully appriz'd the *Jerusalem Jews*, that this Apostle in all the Synagogues where he had preach'd in *Asia Minor*, had absolv'd the *Jewish* Converts from all Obligation to the *Mosaick* Law, especially the ceremonial Law, from a Pretence, that this Law having been only typical and figurative, was abolish'd, done away, and the whole End of it answered by the Death of Christ. That this Charge was true in Fact, and too plain to be denied, is evident from all St. *Paul's* Epistles still extant. He had preach'd the same Doctrines at *Corinth*, *Ephesus*, *Coloss*, *Philippi*, and wherever he came. What then was to be done? How was this Matter to be got over? Not by denying the Fact, for that could not be done with any Appearance of Truth or Reason. Therefore the Apostle advising upon this Occasion with the other Apostles, Elders and Brethren at *Jerusalem*, they put him into this evasive Method, by which he might save himself at least, if he could not support the Cause, as they had projected it. They remind him in the first Place, of the Decree of the *Jerusalem* Council, in which he himself had been present not many Years before, in which it was resolv'd, to lay no farther Burthen upon the *Gentile Converts*, than a few Things which were thought necessary by the *Holy Ghost* and *them*, to avoid the Appearance of Idolatry, and that the *Gentile* Profelytes might not seem to countenance the Temple Worship of the Hea-

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thens: But then they left the *Jewish* Converts under an Obligation to the whole Law of *Moses*, being still the Law of God to them as before. They observe to him farther, that from the great Concourse of People then in *Jerusalem*, and especially of the *Asiatics*, it would be impossible to prevent the Gathering of the People, or a popular Tumult and Insurrection, upon their hearing that he was come to Town, unless he should do something very popular and remarkable to take off the Credit of these Reports, since the many Thousands which he saw converted in *Judea* were all *zealous of the Law*, and observ'd every Branch of it as they did before, in Conformity to the Decree of the Apostolical Council. They inform him, therefore, that they had then four Men, new Converts to Christianity, who were under the Vow of *Nazarites*, according to the strictest Manner of the *Jewish* Law; and they advise him to go into the Temple with these Men, to purify himself, to shave his Head, to offer his Sacrifice, and thereby to comply with the Law in the strictest Sense, which might possibly give the Populace another Turn, quiet and appease the People, and take off the Imputation which had so enraged the Rabble. The Apostle comply'd with this Advice, but this would not do; for the popular Clamour, Tumult and Insurrection so much fear'd, happened, notwithstanding all this Precaution. For tho' *St. Paul*, according to the Advice of the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*, took those

those Men, went into the Temple with them, and there purify'd himself as a *Nazarite*, in Compliance with the Law, *Numb. vi. 2 — 21.* yet towards the End of this Purification, the Populace rose upon them with this Cry, *Men of Israel, help; this is the Man that teacheth all Men every where against the People, and the Law, and this Place. Moreover, he has brought Grecians into the Temple, and has polluted this holy Place.* Upon which popular Uproar and Clamour, the Apostle had been torn in Pieces, had not the chief Captain been presently notify'd of it, and sent a Band of Soldiers to rescue him from the Mob, and secure him in the Castle. *Lyfias*, the chief Captain, having thus secured the Apostle against the Outrage of the Rabble and Clergy who were gathered about them, suffered him, upon his Request, to speak to the Populace. In which Harangue, he gives an Account of his Conversion in his Way to *Damascus*, by Christ's appearing to him in a Vision or Trance, after he had been a zealous Persecutor of this new Religion. Upon his coming to *Damascus* he met there with one *Ananias*, a zealous, Jew, but a Christian Convert, who baptiz'd him into the Christian Faith and Profession, and then sent him back again to *Jerusalem*. At the Apostle's coming thither, he saw *Jesus* again in a Vision or Trance, while he was worshipping in the Temple. And he was then told by Christ, who appear'd to him in this Trance, that he was not to tarry in the City where the People would

would not receive his Testimony, or believe his Report, but that he [*Christ*] who then had appear'd to, and spoke with him, would send him far off from thence to the *Gentiles*. St. *Paul* having given this Account of his Conversion before *Lyfias* the chief Captain, and the *Jewish* high-Church Mob; upon his naming the *Gentiles*, and his Commission to save them, they had no longer Patience, but presently cry'd out, *Away with such a Fellow from the Earth, it is not fit that he should live. And as they cryed and cast off their Clothes, and threw Dust into the Air*, the chief Captain remanded him back to Prison, and commanded him to be examined and scourged, that he might know the Right of the Matter, what the Occasion might be of such an Infurrection and Uproar. But the Execution of this Order put the chief Captain into a very great Consternation and Fright, after the Apostle had told him that he was a *Roman*, or a Freeman of *Rome*. And therefore, upon understanding this, *Lyfias* released his Prisoner, and the next Day ordered the *Jewish* Priests and Council to appear, and bring their Accusations, that he might know what they had to charge him with. But at this Hearing nothing could be concluded, but a general Clamour and Confusion happened upon St. *Paul's* crying out, that he was apprehended and called in Question for teaching and maintaining *the Resurrection of the Dead*. This divided the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, one Party believing the Resurrection

urrection and a future State, and the other not; by which *St. Paul* gain'd over the prevailing Part of the Assembly to his own Side, and laid the chief Captain under a Necessity of remitting him for a farther Hearing, to *Felix* the Roman Governor, and by which he escaped being murdered by the *Jews*; for which Purpose they had formed a Conspiracy under an Oath, could they have procured another Hearing in the same Place, as they intended the next Day. *Lyfias*, upon Notice of this Conspiracy, sent away *Paul* with a strong Guard into *Cæsarea* to *Felix* the Roman Governor, and with the Prisoner he sent a Letter, the Copy of which was thus: *Claudius Lyfias, unto the most noble Governor Felix, sendeth greeting; As this Man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them, I came upon them with the Garison and rescued him, perceiving that he was a Roman: And when I would have known the Cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their Council: There I perceiv'd that he was accused of Questions of their Law, but had no Crime worthy of Death or of Bonds. And when it was shewed me, how that the Jews laid wait for the Man, I sent him straightway to thee, and commanded his Accusers to speak before thee the Things that they had against him. Farewel, Acts xxiii. 26 --- 30.* Upon this, the Apostle had a Hearing before *Felix*, where *Ananias* the High Priest, and the Elders, with *Tertullus* a good Orator, and a very artful cunning Fellow, were present to accuse him. But the

the Apostle stood to it, and proved it before them all, that he had done nothing against the Law, or their ceremonial Temple Worship; that he had strictly all along as a loyal *Jew* comply'd with the whole Law, and that they had nothing to charge him with, but his preaching *the Resurrection of the Dead*. The Matter thus resting, and not determined by *Felix*, St. *Paul* was imprisoned for two Years, till *Felix* being recall'd, *Festus* was sent in his Place, before whom the Apostle had another Hearing, and made, in all Respects, the very same Defence, That he had offended in nothing against the Law, saving that he had maintained the Resurrection, which the *Pharisees* themselves also believ'd and confess'd. But *Festus* could no more fathom this Matter, or decide the Controversy between *Paul* and the *Jews*, than *Lysias* and *Felix* before him. And therefore *Agrippa* coming down about this Time to salute *Festus* upon his new Government, *Festus* acquaints the King with *Paul's* Cause, and the great Tumults and popular Outrages that had happened in *Judea* about him. And the Governor informs the King, that upon a full and fair Hearing of *Paul's* Cause, and suffering him to speak for himself before all his Accusers, he could find nothing criminal in him, as he might have supposed or expected from such popular Violence and Clamours. They had nothing, said *Festus* (in a sneering Way) to charge him with, but *certain Questions of their own Superstition, and about*
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one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Festus, in this Debate before him, willing to favour the Jews, had proposed to the Apostle, that he should go up to Jerusalem, and undergo a farther Trial and Examination there; but St. Paul, to avoid this Snare, appeal'd to Cæsar, to whom the Governor had referr'd him. Tho' the Apostle upon his former Appeal had been remitted to Augustus, and that Judgment could not be recall'd, yet King Agrippa on the Report of Festus was willing to hear so remarkable a Case, which had occasioned such Stirs and Tumults in Judea; and therefore on the Morrow, the King with the whole Court being sat in great Pomp and Solemnity, Paul the Prisoner was call'd to the Bar, and permitted to make his own Defence. But before the Prisoner began his Defence, the Governor opened the Cause with this Oration. King Agrippa, and all Men that are present with us, you see this Man, about whom all the Multitude of the Jews have called upon me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. Yet have I found nothing worthy of Death that he hath committed: Nevertheless, seeing he hath appeal'd to Augustus, I have determin'd to send him. Of whom I have no certain Thing to write unto my Lord; wherefore I have brought him forth unto you, and especially unto thee, King Agrippa, that after Examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For, methinks,

thinks, it is unreasonable to send a Prisoner, and not to shew the Causes laid against him, Acts xxv. 24 --- 27. After this short Oration of the Governor, very much in the Apostle's Favour, the King gave *Paul* to understand, that as he was now at Liberty and had no body to fear, it was expected he should speak for himself, and let them know the Truth of the Matter, and the Ground of all this popular Clamour and Uproar; for as he had appeal'd to *Cæsar*, and that Appeal had been accepted and granted, he need not now any longer keep himself upon Reserve, or be under any Apprehensions of the Malice of the *Jews*, since the *Romans* would certainly protect him against any Power whatever, or against the Superstition of any Religion in the World, while he did not appear as a Criminal, and no body could charge him as an evil Doer. *St. Paul*, with this Liberty and Encouragement, being now secure under the Protection of the *Romans*, and having nothing farther to fear from the *Jews*, stretched forth the Hand and answered for himself. And in this Speech before *Festus* and *Agrippa*, one may find a remarkable Freedom and Openness, very different from what this Apostle had used hitherto, while he was apprehensive of being try'd at *Jerusalem*. For having declared the Innocence and Integrity of his Life, and his strict Adherence to the Law of *Moses* in all its Parts, and concerning which the *Jews* could have nothing to charge

charge him with; having, I say, declared this, as he had done in all his other Speeches and Defences, he now owns the main Point which had thus raised the Malice of the *Jews*, and brought on all this Persecution upon him, which was not for preaching *the Resurrection*, but a *Resurrection*, not the Resurrection of the Dead in general at the End of the World, which they themselves believ'd, but the Resurrection of *Jesus of Nazareth* as the first Fruits from the Dead, and the true and only Proof of a general Resurrection to eternal Life, which could be no otherwise obtained or hoped for but in the Name of *Jesus*, and by the Faith of his having been raised from the Dead. But the Apostle does not here own the Use and Application he had made of this Doctrine, which was the chief Matter of Complaint against him, and the Ground of all his Prosecutions by the *Jews*; namely, that in all their Synagogues where he had preach'd in *Greece* and *Asia Minor*, he had taught and maintain'd that the Law was accomplish'd, abrogated and done away by the Death and Resurrection of Christ; that in Christ, or under the Gospel Dispensation, there could be no Difference or Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*, and that as a Christian, or a Disciple of Christ, no Man was to regard or submit to any other Law in Point of Religion and Conscience, or as the Means of Acceptance with God, but the Law of Christ alone. That the Matter of this Charge was true and could not

be deny'd, is very plain, and therefore the Apostle's Business was to evade it, that he might not be try'd in *Judea*, where he knew the Offence must have been Capital. And this he very artfully effected in all the Processes brought against him in *Judea*, either by dividing the *Jews* among themselves, or possessing the *Roman* Judges in his Favour, or last of all, when he found himself very closely press'd, by appealing to *Cæsar*. This he had done two Years before, while *Felix* was Procurator of *Judea*, and who willing to oblige the *Jews*, had left *Paul* bound till now. In this Hearing and Defence, *Agrippa* and *Festus* were fully convinced of *Paul's* Innocence and Integrity, that he had done nothing worthy of Death, that his moral Character was very clear and unspotted, and that no Acts of Disobedience or Disconformity to the Law of his Country could be clearly prov'd or made out against him; and therefore they determined, without keeping him any longer a Prisoner there, to send him forthwith under safe Conduct to *Rome*, and for the greater Security of his Person to send him by Sea. The King and Governor at this Audience seem to have heard the Apostle with great Attention and Pleasure, till he came to relate the Story of his Conversion, how he came to be convinced that *Jesus* was risen from the Dead, and in what Manner he receiv'd his Commission from him to preach the Gospel. And then *Festus* having no longer Patience, cry'd out with a
loud

loud Voice, *Paul, thou art beside thyself, much Learning hath made thee mad.* To whom the Apostle having made a modest Reply, to let the Governor know that he was not mad, but spake the Words of Truth and Sobriety, he addresses himself again to the King, as to a Man perfectly acquainted with *Moses* and the Prophets, well apprized of all the Customs and Usages of the *Jews*: And he appeals to the King, whether *Moses* and the Prophets had not foretold all this, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the Dead, and should shew the true Light or Way to Salvation to the People and to the *Gentiles*. But the King did not seem to apprehend, or to be at all convinced, that *Moses* and the Prophets had ever taught any such Things, and consequently, thought that *St. Paul* must understand these Writings in a very different Sense from what he and others had always done. And therefore the King having just made this short Reply in a very civil, but jeering Way, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian, or thou wouldest fain persuade me to be so,* he immediately broke up the Court, and resolv'd to send *Paul* directly for *Rome*, since they could not tell what to make of him there. He appear'd to them as a Man of the strictest Honesty and Integrity, but of a warm Imagination, and a little tainted with Enthusiasm, or too much inclined to be influenced by Dreams, Visions, and supernatural Com-

munications. But *Agrippa* and *Festus* could not judge of such Matters, and thought they would not admit of proper Evidence in a Court of Judicature, and were therefore glad to rid their Hands of such a Prisoner. And now having related to you the plain and real Matter of Fact as it stood at that Time, what Doctrines the Apostle taught, what was the chief Ground of his Persecutions, and how he behaved himself hereupon towards the *Jews*, I would here settle the Account with you, Whether *St. Paul*, as a wise and good Man, must be justify'd upon your Principles or mine?

Theoph. Taking the Matter as you have represented it, I must confess, I cannot yet see how this Apostle's Conduct can be justify'd upon any Principles at all, either yours or mine. I think you have brought the Apostle into a very great Dilemma, but cannot imagine how you will bring him out again; for according to your Account of him, he was neither a *Jew* nor a *Christian*, but sometimes one, and sometimes the other, as Occasion serv'd, that by this Temporizing in Religion he might please both Sides, or at least give as little Offence as possible.

Philal. The Account I have given of *St. Paul* is exactly agreeable to all the Memoirs of his Life, which are still extant in his own genuine Epistles, and the History of the *Acts*; and therefore you must take the Matter of Fact as it stands, since it is not in your Power

or mine to alter it. But as to *St. Paul's* Temporizing in Religion, I think, you are quite mistaken, and that this great Apostle always acted upon the same steady, uniform Principles of Religion, whether he was in *Judea, Greece, Asia, Arabia, Egypt*, or any where else. *St. Paul* was a *Jew* by Nation, and could not refuse Obedience to the Law of his Country, as long as that Law subsisted, and he continued a Subject. But then, you must observe, that *St. Paul's* Scheme of *Judaism* was very different from the common National Scheme, and even from the Notions which the rest of the Apostles, Elders and Brethren in that famous Council at *Jerusalem* had of it: And this is so very plain, that one would think, Men must wilfully shut their Eyes not to see it. The Truth is, that *St. Paul* was the great Free-thinker of his Age, the bold and brave Defender of Reason against Authority, in Opposition to those who had set up a wretched Scheme of Superstition, Blindness and Slavery, contrary to all Reason and common Sense; and this under the specious, popular Pretence of a divine Institution and Revelation from God. But our truly Christian Apostle continually laboured under this great Disadvantage, of being opposed in all his Ministry by the whole *Jewish* Nation, and having a Decree of Council standing out against him, pass'd at *Jerusalem* by a large Assembly of Apostolical Christian *Jews*; yet he still stood to his Point, and

would never admit of the Obligation of the Law, as the Law of God, or as any way binding in Point of Religion and Conscience. And herein St. *Paul* had not one Apostle, Prophet or Teacher of that Age, who heartily join'd in with him, except *Timothy*, whom he always called his Son, his Fellow-Labourer, and his faithful Helper in Christ. And tho' *Peter*, *Barnabas*, *John Mark*, and perhaps some few others, joined with *Paul* in preaching the Gospel for a Time, yet they all fell off from him afterwards, upon this very Quarrel, because they could not agree to absolve the *Jewish* Converts from their Obedience to the Law, as the Law of God, or as a Matter of Religion and Conscience. But besides this, upon the Conversion of the Heathen or idolatrous *Gentiles*, *Paul* had another very material Difference with *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, concerning the Profelytism of the Gate: A Question, which at that Time very nearly affected the Peace of the Church, with respect to the Terms upon which the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Converts were to take one another as Brethren, and hold Communion or Fellowship with each other. The Matter of Fact stood thus: The Gospel having been preach'd for about seven Years together, to the *Jews* only, *Peter* was now inform'd, by the Vision of the Sheet let down from Heaven, that God design'd to take in the Profelytes of the Gate also, as Persons sufficiently qualified for the Kingdom of Heaven, without any farther

Compliance with the Law of *Moses*. Accordingly *Peter* immediately went to *Cornelius*, who had just then sent for him, and having converted him and his Company to the Faith of Christ, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and they were baptized; there being then several Converts of the Circumcision accompanying *Peter*, who were Witnesses to what had happened to these devout *Gentiles*, or Profelytes of the Gate. But an Account of this being soon carried to the Church at *Jerusalem*, who were all Converts of the Circumcision, they unanimously condemned and censured *Peter* for eating and drinking, and holding an intimate, friendly Communion with Men that were uncircumcised. Upon which *Peter*, to justify himself, gave them a full Account of the whole Matter, of the Revelation that was made to him, and of the Angel, who at the same Time had ordered *Cornelius* to send for him from *Joppa* to *Cæsarea*, the Messengers coming to the House while he was in this Vision or Trance; and that upon his going with the Messengers, *Cornelius*, and those that were with him, receiving the Faith of Christ, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as it had done on themselves, and the Converts of the Circumcision at the Beginning; so that from the whole Matter, he could not deny them Baptism and brotherly Fellowship, they having had the same Marks and Testimony of God's Approbation and Acceptance, as they themselves had. The Apostles and Brethren

thren at *Jerusalem*, being satisfied with this Account, confirm'd by six Men whom *Peter* had brought with him, and who had been Witnesses to the whole Affair, they came into the same Measures, and resolv'd, for the future, to preach the Gospel to the Profelytes of the Gate, and to receive them as Brethren. And accordingly, from this Time, for eight Years forward, or to the Year 45, the Gospel was preach'd over all *Palestine*, *Phœnicia* and *Syria*, both to the *Syriac* and *Hellenist Jews* and Profelytes, and no Dispute arose in the Churches about brotherly Love, Fellowship, or Communion. But this Year *Paul* having been own'd and recogniz'd as an Apost^{le} by the Church of *Antioch* in *Syria*, he entered upon the Execution of that Office, which he had never done before, but acted only as a Prophet or Teacher. But now he set out with *Barnabas*, and travelled thro' the *Lesser Asia*, where he preach'd the Faith of Christ at *Antioch* in *Pisidia*, *Iconium*, *Lysra*, and many other Places, not only to the *Jews* and Profelytes, but to the idolatrous *Gentiles* also: Among whom, having made great Numbers of Converts, and settled many Churches, he returns to *Antioch* in *Syria*, where he now went on with the same Work, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and Salvation by him alone, to the Heathens. This was about the Beginning of the Year 48, when *Paul* returning from *Asia Minor*, preach'd this Doctrine in *Syria* so near the Borders of *Judea*. But this

this occasioned very great Troubles and Com-motions in the Church, and was like to have produced a Schism never to be healed. For tho' the *Jewish* Christians, upon the Revelation formerly made to *Peter*, had receiv'd the Profelytes of the Gate into their Com-munion, who had purged themselves from Idolatry, according to the Law of *Moses*, be-fore; yet they did not think that they could thus receive the whole *Gentile* World without any legal Qualification at all. Nay, the most zealous of them, upon this Quarrel, raised their Demands higher than ever, and insisted on it, that the Heathen Idolaters could not be receiv'd into the Church upon the same Terms with the Profelytes of the Gate; but that they must first be made Profelytes of Righteousness, that is, be circumcised, and submit to the whole Law, before they could receive them into the Christian Communion, and own them as Brethren. Now, this was a Question of the last Importance, as it related to the essential Constitution of the Church, and the Terms upon which the several Con-verts to Christianity were to hold Commu-nion with one another: And therefore, it was thought necessary, before the Matter was grown desperate, to appeal to *Jerusalem*, and lay the Matter before the Apostles, Elders and Brethren there; which was accordingly done in the Year 49. Upon this Occasion, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, with certain others, were sent up from *Antioch* to *Jerusalem*, where the A-
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postles, Elders and Brethren, being convened in full Council, after great Heats and Debates upon the Question, came at length to this unanimous Vote, Resolution, or Decree, That no other or greater Burthen should be laid upon those, who from among the *Gentiles* had been turned to God, but these few *necessary Things*, namely, that they should abstain from *Fornication*, from *Things offered to Idols*, from *Things strangled*, and from *Blood*. And accordingly, circular Letters were writ by Order of the Council, and sent to all the Churches abroad, where there had been any Converts made from the idolatrous *Gentiles*, and who were now obliged, upon these Terms, to hold Communion with the converted *Jews*. The *Gentile* Converts were to submit to the Law of Profelytism, as the Profelytes of the Gate had done for ten Years before; and the Christian *Jews* were to receive and communicate with them as Brethren and Fellow Christians, upon this legal Condition alone, without laying them under any farther Obligations to the Law. Upon receiving these Letters, containing the Decree or Resolution of the Council, the Church of *Antioch*, and all the other foreign Churches, where *Jews* and *Gentiles* had been mix'd, were perfectly satisfied; they glorified God for so happy a Pacification, and gladly join'd in brotherly Communion with each other. But then, it is here manifest, that the *Jerusalem* Council enjoin'd this Law of Profelytism upon the

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Gentile Converts as *necessary*, or as a Matter of *Religion and Conscience*, without which, the Christian *Jews* could not be justify'd in communicating with them, or receiving them as Brethren. But this soon occasioned fresh Troubles and Disturbances in the Church; for *St. Paul* could never submit to the Imposition of this Law of Profelytism upon his *Gentile* Converts; at least, not in the Sense of the Council, as *necessary*, as a *Matter of Religion*, or as the Law of God, upon the Authority of *Moses*: Tho' yet he allow'd them to comply with it occasionally, as a Matter of Liberty, and for the Sake of Peace, to satisfy these Christian *Jews*, and to prevent an open Rupture with them, while they were mix'd together in the same Church-Societies, and oblig'd to mutual Communion. And here, we see, how it came about, that Things in their own Nature indifferent, were, in the Opinion and Decree of this Council, connected and enjoined with Things morally necessary, as of equal Force and Obligation, in Point of Religion and Conscience, with the eternal, immutable Law of Nature. Some learned Men have mightily perplex'd themselves, and made very strange Sppositions to account for this; and yet the Case is very plain, for admitting this Law of Profelytism to have been the Law of God given by *Moses*, and not yet abrogated or repealed, which was certainly so in the Judgment of the *Jerusalem* Council; it must follow, that all the Parts of it must be
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equally binding in Point of Religion and Conscience; and Men cannot be left at Liberty, with regard to the Laws of God; to obey some as necessary, and reject others as indifferent, because some of them may be natural, and others positive. For where the Authority enjoining, and Evidence of Promulgation are the same, the Obligation of the Law must be the same; or otherwise positive Laws could have no Force at all, but Men would be left, with regard to positive Laws, to receive or reject, to obey or disobey them at Discretion, and just as they may think fit or convenient, with respect to their other Interests. And therefore, as the Apostles, Elders and Brethren at *Jerusalem*, urged this Law of Profelytism upon the *Gentile* Converts, as the Law of *Moses*, concerning the Manner in which Men ought to separate from Idolaters, and purge themselves from Idolatry; it is plain, that they could make no Distinction between the natural and positive Parts of it, without giving up the Authority of the whole Law, as a Revelation from God. The great concerning Debate, therefore, of that Time, was reduced to these two Questions: First, Whether the *Jewish* Converts were still obliged, in Point of Religion and Conscience, to obey the whole Law? And, secondly, Whether the *Gentile* Converts, as a Matter of Religion and Conscience, were bound to comply with the *Mosaick* Law of Profelytism, as the necessary Condition upon which the Christian

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Jews were to hold Communion with them? In both these Points the Apostles, Elders and Brethren at *Jerusalem*, in Consequence of their Decree, stood to the Affirmative, while *Paul* as stiffly maintain'd the Negative against them, declaring, that he had receiv'd this, not from Man or by any intermediate Coveyance, but by immediate Revelation. This Controversy continued all *St. Paul's* Life-Time, that is, from the Year 49, in which the Decree pass'd, to the Year 68, when *St. Paul* was martyr'd at *Rome*. This Controversy at length rose so high, that the rest of the Apostles, not excepting *Peter*, *Barnabas*, and *John Mark*, not being able to come into *St. Paul's* Scheme, thought themselves obliged to separate from him, and leave him to preach his *own Gospel*, as he call'd it, among the *Gentiles*, in his *own Way*. And though *St. Paul* still insisted upon immediate Revelation for this, yet the rest of the Apostles, it seems, never had any such Revelation, nor could *Paul* ever convince them. Nor could this Point of Difference between them be determined by Miracles, for *Peter* wrought as many and great Miracles as *Paul*, and therefore upon any such Proof, the Evidence must have been equal on both Sides; or perhaps *St. Paul* having all the rest against him, might have been very much distanced as to any Proof from Miracles. Upon the Whole, I think, it is evident from all the Memoirs of this great Apostle's Life, which are still extant among us in the History of the *Acts*, and his

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own genuine Epistles, that all his Sufferings and Persecutions all along, arose from his struggling as much as possible for natural Right and Reason, against the Superstition of the Christian *Jews*, and their pretended religious Obligations to the Law of *Moses*, which they thought themselves still as much obliged by as before.

Theoph. St. *Paul* then, it seems, preach'd another and a quite different Gospel from what was preach'd by *Peter* and the other Apostles. Nay, as you will have it, they differed about the most essential and concerning Points, as they must have been at that Time, the fundamental Terms of Communion, and the Method of propagating and settling the Gospel at first. But this being supposed, it is impossible they should have been all inspired, or under the infallible Direction of the Holy Ghost.

Philal. There was no Pretence in those Apostolical Times to any Spirit or Holy Ghost, that made Men either infallible or impeccable, that set Men above the Possibility of erring or being deceiv'd themselves, as to the inward Judgment, or of deceiving others in the outward Sentence and Declaration of that Judgment. This was the wild and impudent Claim of the Church of *Rome* in after Ages, which the Apostles themselves, who really had the Holy Ghost and the Power of working Miracles, never pretended to. And tho' this has been liberally granted them, and supposed of
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them by our Christian Zealots and System-mongers, yet it is what they never claim'd; and their Differences among themselves about the most concerning Points of Revelation, and Method of propagating the Gospel, is an evident Demonstration to the contrary, insomuch that had they pretended to any such Thing, they must openly, and in the Face of the whole World, have contradicted themselves in Fact. They who in the Apostolical Times had these extraordinary Gifts and Powers, were left at Liberty to exercise them upon the common Principles of Reason and human Prudence; and from hence we find that some made a right Use of them for Edification, while others employ'd them only to serve the Purposes of Emulation and Strife, which introduced great Confusions and Disorders among them. And this is an evident Proof that the Persons vested with such extraordinary Gifts and Powers, were neither infallible nor impeccable, that is, they were not hereby made incapable either of deceiving others, or of being deceiv'd themselves. But what makes this still plainer, that the Power of working Miracles had no Connection with the Truth of the Doctrines taught by such Miracle-Workers, is this, that false Prophets, and the most wicked Seducers might and did work Miracles, which they could not have done had Miracles been any Evidence or Proof of Truth and sound Doctrine. Besides, I must maintain it, that whatever Certainty God may

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convey to a Man's Mind by Inspiration, or immediate Revelation, the Knowledge of any such Truth can go no farther upon divine Authority, or as a Matter of divine Faith, than to the Person or Persons thus inspired, or to whom the original Revelation is made; and whoever afterwards receives it from them, must take it upon their sole Credit and Authority, and not upon a divine Testimony or upon the Authority of God. If another Man upon my Testimony, should believe that I have a Revelation from God about a Thing, that could not otherwise have been known or found out, he believes in me and not in God, unless God should in like Manner reveal to him, that he had made such a prior Revelation to me; and then my Testimony, or the Proof of my prior Revelation, would be needless to him. I shall endeavour to make this plain by an Instance, which will come up exactly to the Purpose. If a Body be whirled about a Centre, it will acquire by such a Circumvolution a centrifugal Force, that is, a continual Nifus, or Endeavour in every Part of the Periphery to fly off from the Centre of Motion in the Tangent Lines. And this Force generated in a given Time, will be always equal to the Square of the Arch described in the Time given, divided by the Diameter of the Circle about which the Body revolves. The Truth of this Proposition, *Theophanes*, you and I are demonstratively certain of; that is, we know it by
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perceiving the natural, necessary Relation and Connection of the Ideas themselves; and in Consequence we are able to convey the same Certainty to as many others, as will be at the Pains of considering and comparing the Ideas. But let us suppose, that another Man, who knew nothing, and could know nothing of it as a Truth necessarily founded in Nature, should be inspired with it, or have it immediately reveal'd to him from God: And he would then be as certain of it as you or I can be, because he would connect the certain Truth of the Proposition, with the necessary Veracity of God. But then his Certainty would not be of the same Nature or Kind with yours or mine, because one would be naturally communicable, and the other not. He could not convince any other Man not thus inspired, that he had any such Revelation from God; but whoever should receive it from him must take his own Word for it, and depend properly upon his Authority, and not upon the Authority of God; unless he could make it appear, that he was both infallible and impeccable in the Case, and that he could neither be deceiv'd himself, nor deceive others. And this is so much the Prerogative of God alone, that I doubt it will never be prov'd of any other. In short, he who communicates a natural Truth, gives another Man the same Evidence for it, that he himself had; and he who communicates a Truth in Fact, does it upon his own Credit

and Authority, in which he expects to be believ'd upon such Grounds of Probability, as he is able to produce for it: But for a Man to convey a Truth in Fact upon the Authority of God, is most absurd and impossible. If God speaks to me immediately and directly, I believe him upon his own Authority, without any human Interpositions; but if a Man speaks to me as from God, I must take his Word for it, unless he could prove to me the natural Reasonableness or Fitness of the Thing, and then I should take it, indeed, as coming from God, but not upon any human Authority at all. In a Word, there can be no such Thing as divine Faith upon human Testimony; and this absurd Supposition has been the Ground of all the Superstition and false Religion in the World.

Theoph. You are very positive in this Point; but may not, I beseech you, an original, divine Testimony be convey'd to us by a human Testimony?

Philal. Not, with Submission, as a Matter of divine Faith, because all that human Testimony is liable to Error, unless it can be prov'd that the Things testify'd are naturally or morally true, reasonable and fit; and then we receive them upon those natural Reasons or moral Fitnesses of the Things themselves, and not upon the Testimony at all.

Theoph. All that I mean is, that we may believe upon Tradition or human Testimony, that this or that Revelation has in former Ages been

been made from God to Mankind, and that we may have very good and sufficient Reasons for such Belief. A Matter of Revelation is as capable of being convey'd down to Posterity upon Tradition and human Testimony, as any other Matter of Fact of what Nature or Kind soever. And therefore you must either allow this, or reject all historical Evidence of every other Kind.

Philal. But what I must insist upon is this, that you can assign no Reason or Proof of any Revelation, as coming from God, but what will prove at the same Time, that the Matter of such a Revelation was morally fit and reasonable in the Nature of the Thing, antecedent to, and abstracted from any such Tradition or human Testimony; and consequently, that your Tradition or human Testimony is here brought in to no Manner of Purpose and without Effect. I grant, that we may be probably assured from Tradition and human Testimony, what our Fore-fathers believ'd about God and Religion, and what Reasons they assign'd for it: But whether they ought to have believ'd as they did, or whether their Reasons will hold good or not, is another Question, concerning which your Tradition and human Testimony can never inform you. But the whole Truth of the Matter, is, I think, in short, this: There is one, and but one certain and infallible Mark or Criterion of divine Truth, or of any Doctrine, as coming from God, which we are obliged

to comply with as a Matter of Religion and Conscience: And that is the moral Truth, Reason or Fitness of the Thing itself, whenever it comes to be fairly proposed to, and considered by, the Mind or Understanding. The Ways of conveying the Doctrines of Religion to the Mind of Man, and of procuring them a fair and equitable Consideration, may be various and different; but the Ground or Reason of Reception and Belief is still the same. And thus the same Truths, with the same Grounds and Reasons of Belief, may be proposed and convey'd to the Mind by Inspiration, or immediate Revelation from God; by historical, traditional Evidence, informing us what religious Doctrines and Truths were received, and upon what Grounds and Reasons, by the best and wisest Men in former Ages; or, lastly, by the Exercise of Mens natural Faculties, by which these Truths occur'd to the Mind under the Evidence of their moral Reason or Fitness. Now, I say, that in whichever of these Ways the Doctrines and Truths of Religion are convey'd and proposed to the Mind, their Evidence and Proof, as coming from God, must be still the same, *i. e.* the moral, eternal Reason and Fitness of the Things themselves. This Principle steadily adhered to and acted upon, would keep Mankind clear in Point of Religion, and prevent all Difficulties and Disputes upon that Score. But till they come to this, their Understandings and

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Consciences must be continually under the Influence and Direction of Enthusiasts or Impostors.

Theoph. I know I must indulge your Severity, because, as I presume, you cannot help it. Satire is as necessary to you as breathing, and you can no more talk without it, than you can live without your daily Bread or natural Food. But yet, with Submission, I cannot see why God may not in particular Cases, reveal certain Doctrines and Truths to Men, and give them sufficient Proofs of it, as a Matter of Duty, without letting them into the Reasons of his Commands, or making them wiser than perhaps for the present they ought to be, or can be. You would not always think fit to give your own Children or Servants the Reasons of all your Commands; and yet you would expect Obedience upon the common Principles of superior Wisdom, Right of commanding, paternal Affection, &c. Now, methinks, it is hard that God should not have as much Right of commanding as Man has, or that he should be more obliged to let his Children and Servants into the Reasons of his Conduct, than a common Father or Master.

Philal. Your Reasoning seems to be very just; but the Misfortune is, that the Cases you put are not at all parallel. I hope you do not imagine that I am disputing with you the Authority of God, or denying his Right of commanding, where the Command is first supposed or made evident. This is, indeed,

the Paralogism that Men commonly run into, when they are talking upon the Subject now in Debate. But the Question is not, Whether the Commands of God once supposed or proved, ought to be obeyed or not, or whether our Wisdom be superior to God's? But how we shall know whether God has really commanded the Thing, or what Rule and Measure of Judgment we have in this Case, so as not to be liable to continual Deception and Error about it, and laying ourselves open to all the Enthusiasm and Imposture in the World? If you will keep to this Point, we shall soon bring the present Matter in Debate between us to an Issue; but if you will not keep to it, we shall never bring it to any Thing at all. And here, *Theophanes*, I expect fairer Dealing from you, than from the common Run of our enthusiastick Pulpiters, whose Manner it is always, first to beg the main Point in Question, and then triumph upon it as a Thing prov'd. But to apply your Instance to the present Purpose, and to make it a parallel Case; suppose you were to write to another Person, and he to a third, and the third to a fourth, and so on to the hundredth or thousandth Hand; which Orders were at last to come to your Family, as a Matter of Command and Direction from you, about something of near Interest and Concern between you and your Family: Might they not upon such an Occasion reason thus; if the Master and Father

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of the Family had intended any such Thing, might he not have spoken to us in Person, or have sent his Orders directly under his own Hand and Seal, which we are perfectly well acquainted with, and which he has always instructed us to regard and trust to; and therefore what Reason can there be for his sending an Order of such Consequence in this indirect and round-about Way? Besides, here appears to be nothing in the Nature of the Command itself, that can induce one to believe that ever it came from our Father or Master. Here is a great Stress laid upon Things which do not seem to concern his Interest or ours; he has often warned us to beware of such Deceptions; we cannot depend upon all the Hands thro' which this has been convey'd to us, and therefore we will suspend our Obedience and Actions upon it, till we know more of the Matter, and hear in a more direct and unexceptionable Way from the Master of the Family, which will be as soon as he himself pleases: And in the mean while, we know that he is too much concerned for us, and has too much Wisdom and Goodness to leave us long in the Dark about it, or to make us suffer any Thing under such a Doubt or Perplexity. Now, I beseech you, could you blame your Children or Servants for this? Would you punish the Family for not obeying your Orders, whether they are probably and rationally convey'd or not? Or would you not rather ap-
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prove and reward them for such a prudential Guard against Imposition and Deception ?

Theoph. The Question then, it seems, is this, Whether any rational Proof can be given of a Command or Law from God, where God himself does not speak to the Person immediately and directly; or where the moral Reason and Fitness of the Thing is not proposed and manifested to the Person, or Persons concern'd, at the same Time with the Law or Command ?

Philal. This is exactly the Question, and the only Thing to which I expect an Answer, if you would speak to the Purpose.

Theoph. I must own there is a seeming Difficulty in this Case, which I cannot well get over at present, and therefore what I shall here say, must be with a Saving to farther Thoughts and Enquiry. I think, then, that a positive Command or Law, may be made probable, tho' not certain, as coming from God, where God does not speak to Persons directly and immediately, nor convey the moral Reason and Fitness of the Thing at the same Time. Suppose then, if you please, a certain Number of Persons preaching the eternal, immutable Rules and Principles of moral Truth and Righteousness to the World, against the strongest Bias of the Age in which they live, against all the established Doctrines and Religion of their Country, and against all the temporal Interests and most prevailing, governing Passions
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of Mankind: In preaching these Doctrines they give up all their secular Hopes and Views, sacrifice their Estates, their Liberties and their Lives, as a Testimony to the Truth, and as Things of no Value in Comparison to the Glory of God, and the Happiness of Mankind. At the same Time they work innumerable Miracles, the most uncontrollable, open, and in the Face of the whole Country; and this not for a Trial of Skill, or an Ostentation of Power, but for the Good of Mankind, and as a Demonstration of the Spirit of God with Power. They cast out Devils, heal the Sick, raise the Dead, and cure all Manner of Diseases; not by any Art or Skill in Magick, but by direct immediate Prayer to God, as a Testimony that God was with them, and that they did not this by their own Power or Skill, but by the Power of God, and in the Name of him whom they affirmed to be risen from the Dead, by the same Almighty Power, which then appear'd and wrought in them. Now thus far, supposing the Truth of the Fact, every Thing is clear, and I would not thank you for a Concession. But let us farther suppose, that these Men thus authoriz'd, and thus demonstrating the Power and Wisdom of God; let us suppose them, I say, delivering some Doctrines not evident in themselves, or the moral Truth and Reason of which may not presently appear to the Understandings of those to whom they are proposed, and who are concerned to believe

lieve and obey them. This is the hardest Supposition you can make of any positive Laws, so far as I am concerned in the Defence of them. Now, upon such a Supposition, why may we not receive some Things of a positive and ritual Nature, as coming from God, as containing his Will concerning our Obedience, rationally and probably, tho' you may say, not certainly and demonstratively? What Reason could Men, qualify'd and acting as before, have to deceive you? Or how is it probable that they should be deceiv'd themselves?

Philal. I think you have here put the Matter as strong, and brought it as near to the Point in Debate as possible; and therefore, I shall suppose the same Things of these Men that you have done, and take it for granted, that the Fact is well prov'd. But then, as you do not suppose them to have been either infallible or impeccable, which cannot be prov'd; I cannot see why we should take them upon Trust in some Things, because they have given us very good Credit upon others. So far as they give us the Testimonial of divine Authority, in the moral Truth and Righteousness of the Doctrines themselves, we are obliged to believe and receive these Doctrines, and cannot be mistaken, whether the first Preachers and Promulgers had confirm'd them by Miracles, and the Holiness of their Lives, or not. But where this fails, we can go no farther, unless Truth and Infallibility

fallibility be necessarily connected with the Power of working Miracles, or with the Holiness of Mens Lives; which, I presume, you will not affirm. Supposing it therefore ever so probable, that Men qualify'd and acting as before, can have no Design to deceive us, what Proof have you, that they are not themselves mistaken, when they go from the sole Evidence in this Case, that ought to determine both them and us?

Theoph. This Argument is very pleasant; I ask and contend for a *Probability* which you do not deny; and you deny a *Certainty*, that I do not ask or contend for. You commonly use to distinguish better, which would make one imagine, that you are a little pinch'd.

Philal. The Argument, I can assure you, is not yet brought to a Pinch; but what you seem to suppose here is, that because Men are *certainly* in the Right in some Things, therefore it is probable, that they are not mistaken in any Thing. If this be not what you aim at, *Theophanes*, I do not understand you; and if it is, you ought to explain yourself farther.

Theoph. I mean only this, that untainted unforfeited Credit is good, and that you ought to take it as a Matter of human Probability and Trust, till you can assign some Reason to the contrary. If I have never deceiv'd you, where you have had the best Opportunities of examining the Matter, why should you suspect my Fidelity

lity in other Matters, especially where I can have no Interest in the Case?

Philal. But with Submission, the Question here is not, whether you would deceive me, but whether you are not mistaken yourself, or what Proof you can give to the contrary? Besides, tho' you have never deceiv'd me, where you could not, how does this make it probable, that you will not deceive me where you can? And if one had no Reason in this Case, to believe or disbelieve, the only rational Way would be to suspend the Judgment about it till farther Proof. But, to bring this Matter to some certain, determinate Issue. It is very well known, that there are, and always have been, two Sorts or Species of Religion in the World. The first is the Religion of Nature, which consisting in the eternal, immutable Rules and Principles of moral Truth, Righteousness or Reason, has been always the same, and must for ever be alike apprehended by the Understandings of all Mankind, as soon as it comes to be fairly propos'd and consider'd. But besides this, there is another Sort or Species of Religion, which has been commonly call'd positive, institut'd, or revealed Religion, as distinguish'd from the former. And to avoid Circumlocution, I shall call this the political Religion, or the Religion of the Hierarchy; in which I do not design to distinguish between one Sort of Clergy and another, because, in this Case, they are scarce distinguishable. But I would observe here, that by the political Religion,

ligion, I do not mean the Religion which the Clergy believe, but the Religion which they have learn'd from their Creeds and Systems, and which in Consequence they think themselves bound in *Conscience* or *Interest* to teach. Now, this political, hierarchical Religion, as it never was, or can be built upon any other Foundation, but *Tradition*, *History* and *human Authority*, has been always different in different Ages and Countries. Nay, in the same Age and Country, and Church, Men could never agree about it, what is or is not in this Sense Religion. From whence it must follow, that if this be Religion, Religion must be a mere personal Thing, and that no two Churches, nor even any two thinking Men in the World, are of the same *Religion*. If one was to reckon up all their different Opinions about the Nature, Person, and Offices of Christ, it must fill a large Volume, and contain a Collection of all the Creeds, Systems, and Schemes of Faith in the Christian World. Some of them make Christ to be *God equal to the Father*, and damn and hereticate all who do not believe it; while others bring him down to a mere Man, and will not allow him to have had any Existence prior to his Nativity or Incarnation. Some will have his Death to be a proper Atonement or Propitiation for the Sins of the World; while others explode and condemn this as absurd, impossible, and contrary to the Perfections of God, to the Nature of Man, and to the necessary

cessary Reason and moral Fitness of Things. Some maintain, that there are seven *Sacraments* by divine Institution; while others affirm, that there are but two; and yet in the mean Time, they know not what a *Sacrament* is, and could never agree about the Meaning of the Word. One would think that Marriage, or the religious Obligation and Tie of one Man to one Woman during Life, should, upon the Christian Institution, be the most *sacred Oath*, or *Sacrament* in the World; but yet our Protestant Clergy, will, I presume, in general, be of another Mind. In short, this clerical Religion is a new Thimble and Button, or a Powder-le-Pimp, which may be this or that, every Thing or nothing, just as the Jugglers please. And yet all this, in their different Ways, if you can believe them, is divine Institution, and immediate Revelation from God. All which can amount to no more than this, that the several Passions and Interests of every Party, and of every Man, are divinely instituted by immediate Revelation; and this is the Privilege of an *orthodox Faith*, and of being religious in the *clerical Way*.

Theoph. I find you are resolv'd not to credit yourself to the Clergy, and that you look upon them as very bad Pay-Masters; but then I wish you would tell me wherein your Christianity lies, or upon what Principles you pretend to be a Christian. In short, *Philaletes*, what think you of Christ, or what is Christianity?

Philal. I take Christianity to be that most complete and perfect Scheme of moral Truth and

and Righteousness, which was first preach'd to the World by Christ and his Apostles, and from them convey'd down to us under its own Evidence of immutable Rectitude, Wisdom and Reason. This Definition, as I imagine, takes in all that is essential to Christianity, or that can be receiv'd and allow'd as a constituent Part of it.

Theoph. But what, I beseech you, would you make of the Evidence of Miracles, as a Proof of divine Revelation; does that signify nothing at all?

Philal. I am willing to allow as much as you can make of it, which perhaps might be just nothing; and therefore to oblige you I shall allow a little more.

Theoph. You are extremely obliging indeed, your Generosity, in this Case, is no Matter of Doubt to me; and as I expect nothing at all, the smallest Thing in the World will be taken as a Boon, and therefore pray be as liberal as you can.

Philal. You need not, *Theophanes*, beg any Thing of me that is in my Power to grant; but I presume you would not put me to so hard a Trial of Friendship, as to extort Concessions against Truth and Reason.

Theoph. No, *Philalethes*; this I am sure would be to no Purpose: I cannot pretend to bribe you, and if my Friendship was of Value enough, I should scorn to prostitute it upon any such Occasion. But in the mean Time, I shall be glad to know, without Com-

pliment or Ceremony, what you can grant me in this Point as a Matter of Reason and Justice, and without Favour or Affection.

Philal. That there can be no Connexion between the Power of working Miracles, and the Truth of Doctrines taught by the Miracle-Workers, is, I think very plain, and I take this as a Concession from you, since you objected nothing to what I observ'd before, that false Prophets, the most wicked Seducers, and even the Devil himself may work Miracles. And therefore Miracles alone consider'd can prove nothing at all, and ought to have no Weight or Influence with any Body. But yet it will not follow, nor do I intend to prove from hence, that Miracles are of no Use, or can serve to no Purpose at all in Religion. Miracles naturally tend to awaken and alarm Men, to take them off from a supine Negligence and Incogitancy, and to bring them to a sober and sedate Consideration of the Matters thus propos'd to them: Especially if the Miracles are wrought for the Good of Mankind, and with a visible Regard to their Interest and Happiness. This must convince Men, that the Persons thus qualify'd, and thus employing their extraordinary Powers, can have no Design against them, but must upon the Whole intend their real Interest and Welfare. And this Effect the Miracles of Christ and the Apostles plainly had upon the People, to convince them that they were no Enemies to God, or their Country; and

and consequently, to dispose them to consider coolly and soberly, the Nature and Tendency of the Doctrines they had to propose to them, and not to take up implicitly with what the Priests and Rulers thought or said of it. The Miracles so visibly promoting the common Good, made the People in general thoughtful and attentive; and consequently, disposed them to receive the Truth upon its proper Evidence, or rational Proof; which was all that they were intended for. Miracles, therefore, are perhaps the most effectual Means of removing Prejudices and procuring Attention to what is deliver'd; but can never be taken for the proper Evidence or Proof of the Doctrines themselves, without quitting the only certain Mark or Criterion of divine Truth, and exposing ourselves to all the Enthusiasm and Imposture in the World. And the Reason is, as observ'd before, that the supernatural Power of working Miracles has no Manner of Connexion with moral Truth and Righteousness; and yet moral Truth and Righteousness, when it comes to be proposed to, and consider'd by the Mind, is the only sure Proof or Evidence of any Doctrine, as coming from God, and to be receiv'd as a Matter of divine Authority. It is not here a sufficient Ground of believing any Doctrine, as from God, to say, that 'tis indifferent, or at least not contrary to moral Truth and Righteousness, as appearing to the Understanding; no more than it would be in receiving

ceiving any Coin or Money, as circulated by the King's Authority, without his authoriz'd Stamp, to say, that tho' the King's Stamp was not upon it, it was however a fair Blank, or at least no false Stamp. But notwithstanding this Plea in receiving, or putting off such Money, I might be reasonably deem'd and prosecuted as an Enemy to the King and Country. This, *Theophanes*, I take to be exactly the Case; the Generality of the Clergy of all Denominations, from the very Beginning, have been continually palming upon us false *Coin* under the Authority of God, and when they are convicted of it, they cry out, that this is but now and then, in a few particular Instances, and only here and there a *Piece*; and they think it hard, very hard, that they cannot have Credit upon such small Matters. What, must nothing sell at these religious Markets, but moral Truth and Reason? God forbid! Men of *Israel* help! Help, O King and ye Nobles and Senators of the Land; Help, O ye Reverend and Right Reverend Priests and Prelates, who are engaged in the same sacred Obligations and Ties of Interest with ourselves: These are the Men that would turn the World upside down, and confine the Interests of the Hierarchy to moral Truth and Righteousness. But if ever this should happen, nothing but the Judgments of God can be expected from Heaven, as certainly as the Truth, Infallibility, and divine Authority of our *political Religion*.

Theoph. But I hope you would not rank the whole Clergy of every Denomination under this Class; I know many of the Clergy of several Denominations, and so I believe must you, who make nothing necessary in Point of Religion. but what is morally true, right and reasonable. But you seem to have a riveted Spite against the whole Order, and can never speak or write of them without a visible Emotion, and dipping your Pen in Gall.

Philal. You mistake me, *Theophanes*, I have no such Aim as you imagine; I know very well, that many Ecclesiasticks of the several different Denominations are wise and reasonable Men, and lay no Stress upon any Thing in Religion, but on moral Truth and Righteousness. But then, pray, how few are these, and what is their Fate? Are they not generally look'd upon and treated as common Enemies and as the Reproach and Disgrace of the holy Order, who would prefer Truth to Interest, and Righteousness to the Power of a Party? Are they not left to starve upon lean Curacies, or just to keep Life and Soul together, in remote Villages and Country Parishes, upon the charitable Contributions of the honest Poor? And in the mean while, how are our political State Divines every where caress'd and flatter'd, and how happy is it for them that they have an Interest much superior to Truth and Reason, Religion or Conscience? And the Ground of all

all this is certainly a clerical Religion above Reason, and above all Possibility of Proof: Yet after all, *Theophanes*, I can assure you, that I have not the least Design to abolish, or set aside the Ecclesiastical Order, but only to reform it, and keep these Guardians of our Souls within due Bounds. Would to God, that all the King's Servants were Prophets, and all our Ministers, Preachers of Righteousness; then should we gladly pay Tithes and Contributions, and rejoice in the Salvation of the Lord. But I would fain disarm this spiritual Militia of those carnal Weapons, which they have always fought against us with, and in which Warfare the Devil, by divine Permission, has given them too much Success. Christianity and reveal'd Religion is the common Cry; but when they come to define or explain this, 'tis evident that they mean nothing by it, but certain Doctrines which are very beneficial to themselves, and which at the same Time have really no Foundation in the *New Testament*.

Theoph. I am glad, *Philaethes*, to hear you mention the *New Testament*, and Doctrines which are there founded, I doubted whether you would stand by any such Test; but if you will, I am persuaded, that all the wise and honest Part of the Clergy will join Issue with you, and be ready to give up any Opinions, or Doctrines, which you can prove not to be there grounded. You must, as I presume, allow them the two Sacraments, and the

the Death of Christ, as a Propitiation or vicarious Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, which seem to be plainly founded in the *New Testament*, and are surely Matters of Revelation, and not properly Matters of Reason, though they may appear very reasonable when they are once revealed and proposed to the Understanding.

Philal. I allow that there is nothing in these Doctrines as contain'd and taught in the *New Testament*, but what may be admitted as reasonable, when they are once rightly understood; but then, when they come to be thus understood, they will no longer serve the Purposes of the Hierarchy.

Theoph. I shall never contend for any Mens Interest longer than Truth will serve their Purpose. But why the Sacraments, and Death of Christ, as a Sacrifice for Sin, will not serve the Purpose of the Clergy, when rightly understood, as well as they can serve their Purpose now, you will please to inform me, remembering still, that I do not here mean the *Papist*, but our reformed, Protestant Clergy. For it does not yet occur to me what Doctrines they teach about the Sacraments, and Death of Christ, that can be of any Use or Advantage to them more than to others.

Philal. I wonder you should not see what peculiar Advantages even the Protestant Clergy have made, and what Interest and Influence they have gain'd by their Doctrine about the Sacraments, as necessary Means of Grace, of

which they are the sole Proprietors and Dispensers. For if the Sacraments are necessary Means of Grace, and none but the Clergy can dispense them, the Clergy must be as necessary as the Sacraments themselves. But if it should appear, that according to the *New Testament*, the Clergy have no peculiar Part or Lot in this Matter, and that the Sacraments are as valid and useful in the Hands of the Laity, as in their Hands; it is possible that the Clergy might lose some Weight or Influence by it, should this ever come to be the common Opinion; especially if it should be made appear farther, that these Sacraments were only temporary or occasional Things, and never intended as standing, immutable Laws of Christianity; and both these I shall endeavour to prove, whatever the present Clergy of any Denomination may happen to think of it, or lose by it.

It must be here observ'd then, that both the Sacraments, as we now call them, were civil Usages, or national Customs among the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, and all along for many Ages before. So that Christ did not herein institute any new Ritual or Ceremony, but thought fit to apply two of their ancient, national Customs to a religious Use, which might be more agreeable to the Nature and Constitution of his new Religion; and as it is plain, that our Saviour made no Change or Alteration in these national Customs or Usages, but took them as they were, it is impossible to understand
 them

them right, without considering what the national Usage of the *Jews* then was. And here, it is certain, with respect to Baptism, that the *Jews* baptiz'd every Profelyte, with his whole House or Family, Children and all. They thus baptiz'd the Profelytes of the Gate, but the Profelytes of Righteousness they baptized and circumcised too. But then, it must be considered, that tho' they baptized their Profelytes with their Households, Families, Servants and Children, yet they never baptized the Issue or Posterity of such, while they were born under the same Dispensation, and continued in the same Faith and Profession. Now in this Sort of Baptism, the Priests or Clergy had nothing at all to do with the Matter, no more than with Circumcision; and every Body knows, that it was no Part of their Office, but it was always done by the Master or Head of the Family, or by any one else under his Authority and Direction. And since Christ himself makes no new Orders or Regulations about this, we are to understand it according to the Practice and Custom before in Use among the *Jews*; nor is it possible the Apostles and first Christians could have understood it otherwise, without farther Directions. Baptism, therefore, as grounded upon the antient Custom and Usage of the *Jews*, from whence it was plainly taken, can only concern those who are profelyted to Christianity at first, and not their Children or Posterity, born under the same Dispensation, and continuing

tinuing in the same Profession. Nor have the Clergy any Thing to do with it, as an exclusive Right, so far as it does extend; but so far as they have ever been made use of, or employ'd as a Matter of Conveniency, they have been apt to plead Privilege, and run it into Necessity. And as Baptism was not originally a Church Ordinance, or any special Work of the Clergy; so the same Thing will be evident of the other Sacrament or Eucharist, upon a little Consideration of the Nature, Original, and Design of it. It was a national Custom, or Usage, among the *Jews*, after Supper, which was their set Meal, to break Bisket round the Table, with which every one present had his Cup of Wine; and as this concluded the Supper, or Entertainment, it was attended with a Grace or short Form of Thanksgiving to God, for these and all his other Favours, and praying the Continuance of them, and Assistance to make a right Use of them: And this was a very rational Custom or Practice, as nothing can be more fit or reasonable than to acknowledge God in all our Ways, and ascribe all our Enjoyments and Blessings to his Bounty. Now, it is plain, that Christ here, when he had supp'd upon the Pascha with his Disciples, distributed the Bisket and Wine exactly according to the common Custom and Usage of the *Jews*, or after the Manner of the Country in all their other set Meals; which Usage he made no Alteration in, but this, that the Bread and

Wine, after the Supper or Entertainment, with the Grace attending it, and upon which they call'd this Cup the Grace Cup, than that this, I say, for the future, should be done in his Name, *i. e.* in the Faith and Profession of his Doctrine, as they were to do every Thing else; and particularly, that they should do it in Remembrance of him who had died a Martyr in this Cause, as a Seal and Confirmation of the Truth of it, and of his Love to Mankind. This was the plain Matter of Fact, and is there any Thing here of a Church Institution? Any work cut out for the Clergy? Or any peculiar Action or Office reserv'd to them? Christ did this as the Master of the Family, or Founder of the Feast, as others did in the like Case; but not as a Bishop, Priest, or Clergyman. I know, that this Usage was pretty early brought into the Churches, in their very large and populous Assemblies, first at *Corinth*, and afterwards in other Places; but this was done without any apostolical Advice or Authority. And when the Clergy had once got it into their Hands, they soon made a *Mystery*, and afterwards a *Contradiction* of it. And we are now so far departed from the original Practice and Usage in this Case, that it is hard to say what we have retain'd, in common with Christ and the Apostles. The Apostles made Use of a thin, hard and brittle Bread or Bisket, that would easily break, to signify the Body of Christ broken for us; but we use a soft, thick, tough

tough Bread, that will not break, and therefore they are forced to cut it: The Apostles used unleavened Bread, to signify Sincerity and Truth; but we use leavened, fermented Bread: The Apostles made this a religious Rite or Usage in every Family, and at every friendly Entertainment; but the Clergy confine it to their Churches, where there is not much Friendship, and very seldom any Entertainment at all: The Apostles left this holy Communion in the Hands of the Brethren or Laity; but the Clergy make it a peculiar, mysterious Action of theirs, as the necessary Means of conveying Grace: The Apostles, as all the most primitive Christians testify'd and practis'd after them, mix'd Water with their Wine upon this Occasion, to signify and represent the Water and Blood that issued out of Christ's Sides when he was pierced; but our Clergy use nothing but Wine. In short, they have left out every Thing in this Sacrament, with Regard to the external Rite or Usage, that was truly primitive and apostolical, and retain'd nothing but their own Inventions, Corruptions and Alterations. But to resume the Consideration of the other Sacrament a little farther, I mean Baptism, cold Bathing, or plunging and washing the Body all over in cold Water, as a religious Rite; I say, that there is no such Thing now remaining, except among the *Baptists*, who, upon this Account, are rightly distinguish'd by that Name, since our other Churches at present
do

do not baptize at all. To recount here the Defences of our modern Clergy, and what they have said for this new Institution of their own, and their Method of dipping by sprinkling only, might serve to entertain you; but their Reasons and Arguments are so very weak, idle and ridiculous, that the bare mentioning them must expose and turn them into a Jest. How sprinkling, or pouring Water upon the Face, can signify or represent the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of the Person, is a little hard to conceive. I must own, that this sprinkling or pouring may very aptly signify and represent the Sprinkling the Conscience with the Blood of Christ, or the Effusion of the Spirit upon the Soul: But then, it unluckily happens here, that this was not intended to be signify'd or represented by Baptism, in the Scripture Account of it; nor is it in the least agreeable to the Custom and Usage of the *Jews*, from whence it was borrowed. The *Jews* and People of *Israel* were very famous and remarkable for the Itch, Scab, Leprosy, and all other cutaneous Foulnesses; for which they had never found any Thing so beneficial and effectual as *cold Bathing*, which might, perhaps, be the Reason why their great Lawgiver interwove this Practice with the very Genius and Constitution of their Religion; since, according to the Constitution of their Law, there could hardly a Day pass in which they must not be obliged to use cold Bathing several Times; and indeed, if a fresh and clear
Skin,

Skin, a good Complexion, a Freedom from cutaneous Diseases, a System of well-braced Nerves, and all that Strength, Activity and Vigour which the Body can communicate to the Mind; if, I say, these Things are of any Value or Consideration, I think cold Bathing deserves to be enjoin'd under the strongest religious Sanctions.

But to return, if there be any Religion in positive Laws, and external Rituals or Ceremonies, it must certainly consist in keeping close to the original Institution itself, without the Liberty of varying from it in any the least Circumstance of Action. The People of *Israel* thought so when they built the Tabernacle first, and afterwards the Temple, exactly according to the Commands and Directions given from God to *Moses* and *Solomon*, from which if they had swerv'd in the least Tittle or Article, the Whole could have been good for nothing; but must have been Rebellion instead of Obedience. It is wonderful to observe, how our modern Judaizers behave themselves upon this; they are zealous Sticklers for positive Laws, without which they would not give one Farthing for Religion; but then they have a Power to repeal or alter the positive Laws of God, and to make such new ones of their own, as they shall think convenient. Without Ceremony, Religion is a Shadow, and if you will not grant them this, they must give up the *Evidence* of what some of them cannot yet see, and the *Substance* of Things hoped for.

But

But though our Brethren the *Baptists*, as they are called, come nearest of any among us now to this original, religious Usage of *Baptism*; yet, I think, they are much mistaken in imagining as they do, that *Baptism* was ever intended as any Sign or Means of *personal Sanctification*. *Baptism*, among the *Jews* and *primitive Christians*, who took it from them, was always look'd upon as a social and national Ritual, or, as our Divines affect to call it, an initiating Ordinance. By this Profelytes were made, and Men were received and recognized as Members of such or such a religious State, or constituted Society. When Persons had entered themselves and their Families into this new State, or publick Oeconomy of Religion, they, and their Issue or Posterity, in Case of no personal Apostasy from it afterward, were intitled to all the Benefits and Privileges of the Kingdom of God, under such a Constitution, and all consider'd as holy in this national Sense, without a farther Continuation of *Baptism*; and this upon the Maxim which they all supposed and went upon in this Sort of Purification, *that if the Root be holy, the Branch is also holy*. And thus, as the *Jews* never baptiz'd the Children, Issue, or Posterity of their original Profelytes, while they were born under the same Oeconomy, and continued in the same Profession; so neither did the primitive Christians, for the first two hundred Years; and whenever the Christian Church departed from this original *Jewish*, and afterwards Apostolical

stolical Practice, Rule and Measure, they certainly departed from the only true original Ground and Reason of the whole Matter. This Practice, upon the above-mentioned Principle, continued in the Church, till they came to fall into an odd Sort of a Notion, by mistaking a Passage in *John's* Gospel, that without the actual Application of both the Sacraments, there could be no Communication of Grace, or any Possibility of Salvation. And then they began to baptize Infants, and give them the other Sacrament too, much about the same Time, and upon the same Principle. And they even cramm'd the sacramental Bread down the Throats of some weak Infants who were not able to swallow it, upon this most godly and charitable Resolution, which they came to in one of their earliest Councils, that none should perish for want of the Grace of God; and no Doubt that such wise Reasoners must naturally conclude, that it would be better to choak such poor, innocent, helpless Creatures, than to damn them. This was the clerical Religion then, and it has never been much better since. Thus much I have thought fit to say of the two Sacraments, as to their original Foundation and Use, and the present Notion and Application of them. And now, *Theophanes*, I shall be glad to hear what Observations you have been making upon it, and how far you think me to be in the Right or the Wrong.

Theoph.

Theoph. I must own, that I have not much considered this Matter, and must therefore take farther Time, and some other Opportunity to give you my Thoughts about it. But, I believe, the Clergy in general will bear your Argument very grievously, not only for the Appearances of Truth and Probability in it, but more especially for the Sting. Methinks, it is pity you could not say the same Things in a softer Way.

Philal. But then you own that it would not have the same Effect; and I can assure you, that I take the Lethargy to be so very deep, and the Case so extremely dangerous, that, I think, the sharpest and roughest Method to be no more than necessary to a Cure; and if you should imagine the Method a little too severe, you must not blame me, while the Truth is so evident, and so necessary to be known.

Theoph. I believe you will have no Reason to boast of your Cure in this Case. And having bethought myself a little, I can assure you, that you have not yet cured me. As for *Baptism*, I have not much to say, for I can no more approve of *Infant Baptism* than you, nor of the present Mode of *Baptism* as now generally practis'd: But then, as to the other Sacrament, I doubt whether you would gain any Thing to the Side of true Religion, if you could throw it out of our Churches.

Philal. But, do you think it might not be something gain'd to the Side of true Religion, if one could throw this Sacrament out of the Churches in *Spain, Portugal, France, Italy*, and all the Popish Countries?

Theoph. Perhaps it may be so; but then we have no such Abuse of it in our Churches. Our Clergy do not pretend to make our Gods, or to convey the Grace of God to us by any independent Action of their own.

Philal. It may, or may not be so; the Case is doubtful, I own, and much may be said on both Sides. But, admitting this, pray, why is not the religious Commemoration of Christ's Death, and of the Blessings and Benefits we receive from him, as effectual after Dinner as after Supper, or in a private Family as in a Church?

Theoph. Were this allow'd, I doubt, our private Families would be no Churches, and we should have no Churches made up of private Families.

Philal. Perhaps, you are mistaken in this, at least a Reason for it is very necessary. Do you think, that *publick Worship* is only owing to a positive, ritual, or clerical Religion? If you imagine this, I am so far of another Mind, that, I think, this positive, ritual, clerical, or sacerdotal Religion, has been infinitely prejudicial to publick Worship, and has made the most judicious and thinking Part of Mankind very indifferent whether

whether they attend any such Worship or no. Can you imagine that any Man of Sense in *England* would ever go to Church, to hear these positive Rituals and Ceremonials preach'd to him, if he had not some other Motives and Inducements, which perhaps the Clergy are not aware of?

Theoph. But what other Motive or Inducement can any good or honest Man have in going to Church, but his Belief of the Doctrines there taught, and an Expectation of growing wiser and better by them?

Philal. Do you think this the only Aim and Design of Men in going to Church, or is this the Notion you have of publick Church Assemblies?

Theoph. I think this is what they ought to propose and aim at, or otherwise they might as well and better stay at home.

Philal. But suppose their staying at home should give them the Reputation of Atheists and Infidels, though otherwise they might improve their Time better at home, than at Church? Would you not rather go to Church, or even take the Sacrament in Turn, to be deem'd a good Christian, than stay at home for the Imputation of Atheism and Infidelity?

Theoph. You have then no other Reason for going to Church, or attending publick Worship, but to save your Reputation; and yet as soon as this Reason is known, your Reputation is lost.

Philal. The Clergy always understand these Things right enough. They will never question your Want of Faith, if you will but hear and pay them well; or if you pay well, it is a Matter of no Consequence to them, whether you hear them or not. Faith, indeed, cometh by hearing, but Money may be given without hearing or seeing either. These Gentlemen, *Theophanes*, are always ready to make proper Allowances, and will never make you an Atheist, or an Infidel, without good Reason for it. A little Money shall authorize you to sleep all the Time of Sermon, to which you had a natural Right before. But you ought not to take such a Liberty without an Indulgence, in which Case your Money is better than your Faith. You never ought to think or speak freely without a Licence, and 'tis the Church only that can authorize you to think or speak at all. But in the mean while, 'tis very much to be wish'd, that we could attend our Pulpit Discourses, as reasonable Creatures, and without affronting our Understandings. For, I think, it is a very hard Task which they put upon us, to quit either Revelation or Reason, and that we must have no Religion, or no Sense.

Theoph. But, pray, tell me what is this clerical or sacerdotal Religion, as you affect to call it?

Philal.

Philal. Sir, The clerical or sacerdotal Christianity or reveal'd Religion, consists in the Belief of Doctrines which cannot be understood, and which consequently cannot be taught; and in the Use of Means which have no natural or rational Connexion with, or Tendency to the End propos'd. Or, if you please, it is the mystical Way of Salvation.

Theoph. It is pity, *Philaethes*, methinks, that you were not a Preacher yourself, or that you would not give us a Sample, at least, how the Clergy ought to preach, and what Doctrines they are to instruct us in, as from Christ and the Apostles.

Philal. Perhaps, having been so long used to systematical Divinity, you could not bear a Christian Sermon.

Theoph. Yes, Sir, you know very well that I can bear Anti-Christianity from you, and I should willingly attend to you for an Hour or two, or as long as you please, provided that you would but preach, and at the same Time take some unexceptionably orthodox Text to explain and discourse upon it in your own Way.

Philal. Perhaps a Lay-Sermon might not be altogether unedifying; but were you to urge me to it, you might possibly repent it, if the Preacher should happen to be too long-winded.

Theoph. I have armed myself against such a Threat, only with one Exception more, which is this, that you shall not tie me down too strictly to Church-Orders; but give me Leave to take Snuff, walk about, and take a Glass of Wine now and then, or hand it to you, and even to break off the Thread of your Discourse for a Minute or two, if I should have an Occasion of going out.

Philal. Since you have provok'd me thus far, I shall take you upon all your Terms, and shall even indulge you farther to interrupt me, if you please, by throwing an Objection now and then in my Way, if you should find Occasion. But, I believe, at present you want something else more than a Sermon. The Bell, I hear, rings to Dinner, and lest we should be too deeply engaged, here comes a Servant to call us in. We will dine and refresh ourselves a little, and then in the Afternoon I shall beg your Christian Patience for a few Hours in this Place.

Theoph. Well, *Philaletes*, having now made a good Dinner, and being returned to this fine Summer Apartment, so well contrived for Speculation and Solitude, I must demand your Promise, that you will give me a Sermon upon some unexceptionably orthodox Text, under the Condition as already stipulated. And as I am prepared with Patience, I expect that you should talk Sense.

Philal. I could submit to all your Conditions, but the last, which is a new one, and therefore I must demand your Patience, whether I should talk Sense or not. I would comply, *Theophanes*, with any Thing reasonable; but to oblige a Man in preaching to talk Sense, would be most unreasonable Nonsense. However, with Submission to your better Sense, I shall crave your Attention to that Expression of *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, Chap. i. ver. 7. where speaking of Christ, he saith; *In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace.*

It will be impossible to understand *St. Paul* here, or elsewhere, without considering the Circumstances he was under, and the different Tempers, Principles and Interests of the Persons he had to deal with. This Apostle, as is well known, had been born and bred a *Jew*, and brought up under *Gamaliel*, a famous Professor in the School of *Hillel*. In Consequence of which Education, he was at first a great Zealot for the Law of *Moses*, and a bitter Enemy to the Christians. He dreaded much the Consequences of this new Religion, and made it his Business to execute the penal Laws upon as many of its Professors, as he could apprehend and bring to Justice. But all this was from Ignorance, and a mistaken Zeal, as he afterwards confesses. He was still a Per-

son of great natural Honour and Integrity, and his Prosecution of the Christians was carried on, as he thought, for the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. He was very warm for Truth, and a great Promoter of it in a *legal Way*, which he look'd upon, as the most effectual Means of *suppressing Error*. This was the true Spirit of *Judaism*, and the Perfection of Righteousness according to the Law. *St. Paul* was of the *establish'd Church*, and found himself obliged to stand by it in *Interest*, which he thought to be *Conscience*. But this great Apostle was convinced by a Miracle. For this, I think, is plain, that nothing less than Miracle could have convinced this great Rabbīn, that he had mistaken the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. But this Apostle being once convinced of his Error, he became a remarkable Defender of Toleration, the Right of private Judgment, and Liberty of Conscience, against all the Force and Terrors of the Law; tho' this Law had the best Plea in the World of any human Law, for being the Law of God. But *St. Paul* being once convinced to the contrary, had the Courage and Honesty, openly and in the Face of the World, to condemn this Law, as a mere temporary, worldly and carnal Institution, that never could give Life, or procure Acceptance with God; and that must prove the eternal Ruin and De-

Destruction of all those who had any such Expectations from it. And while he left the *Jews* to be governed by it in their civil and national Capacity, as he himself always comply'd with it, he exempted all others from it, as not having the least Concern in it, and could not be at all obliged by it. He declared, that true Religion was quite another Thing, and that the Law, of which they were so infinitely fond, was so incapable of giving Life, that they who expected Happiness and Immortality, from such an Obedience, must perish for ever. Upon this Account, the Apostle being rejected and abandoned by his Countrymen, as a dangerous Innovator, a *pestilent Fellow*, and a *Mover of Sedition*, he turned to the *Gentiles*, and made the Overtures of eternal Life and Salvation to them, as obtainable by Jesus Christ and his Gospel, without the least Dependence on the *Jews*, or Subjection to the Law of *Moses*. But, notwithstanding this, he did not quite give up his own Nation. He still retain'd Bowels of Compassion towards them, and laboured, with all his Might, to gain over as many of them as he could to the Interest of true Religion. And for this he was the best qualify'd of any Man, as having been thoroughly instructed in the Law, and being perfectly well acquainted with all their popular prevailing Opinions, and traditional

Doctrines, of which he never fail'd, upon all proper Occasions, to make his best Advantage. Under these Circumstances he could have no great Hopes from the *Jews*; but yet he became *all Things to all Men, that he might gain some* of his own Nation. In his Arguments and Reasonings with the *Jews*, he made all proper Allowances for their national Prejudices, and chose to express himself in a Manner that might give them the least possible Offence. And, from hence, he was often obliged to make use of Words borrowed from the Law, and apply them to his own Purpose, tho' in a figurative and allegorical Sense, and not in their strict, original Sense and Construction, in which they had been always used and applied as *Jewish Law Terms*. Any due Attention, in reading *St. Paul's* Epistles, must discover this; and yet, the Want of observing it, has occasioned great Difficulties and Perplexities in the Christian Scheme; and many learned Systems have been contriv'd and drawn up upon it, which consist only of a most unnatural and inconsistent Jumble and Mixture of Christianity and Judaism together. This is what I shall have too much Occasion to exemplify, in pursuing the present Subject; but yet, I hope, you will have Patience enough to hear me out, while I shall endeavour to lay before you the true State of the Case.

St.

•*St. Paul*, in this Epistle to the Church of *Ephesus*, makes it his Business to extol and magnify the rich and free Grace of God, as now manifested to the whole World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, under the Gospel Dispensation, and to raise in them the highest Sense of Gratitude, and Love to God upon this Account; even to that God, who being the common Father of Mankind, the supreme Governor of the World, and the original Source or Fountain of all Goodness, had now by *Jesus Christ* in the Gospel made known his Will to all Men in general, without any Respect of Persons, or any particular Regard to one Nation above another; as being desirous, that all Men, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, who were equally his Creatures and Subjects, should equally obtain his Favour, and stand upon the same Terms for Salvation and eternal Life; which eternal Life and Happiness, as Man's ultimate End, with the necessary Means of obtaining it, are now reveal'd in the Gospel by *Jesus Christ*, in whom we have Redemption thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace. In or by whom, i. e. by *Jesus Christ*, in Consequence of his perfect Obedience unto Death, we are redeem'd, or deliver'd from the Dominion and Condemnation of Sin, by the rich Favour and superabounding Love of God, as manifested to Mankind by his Son *Christ* in the Gospel: *Which Gospel,*

pel, or *Grace of God* thus manifested to all Men, for their common Benefit, both teacheth and enableth us to *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in the World.* This being, as I apprehend, the true Sense and import of the Words, I shall proceed, without any farther Exposition or Paraphrase, to discourse upon them in the following Method.

1st, I shall state and consider the Doctrine and Method of Atonement, or Propitiation by Blood.

2dly, I will consider the Christian Doctrine of Redemption, or Deliverance from the Power of Sin and Satan, by the Death of Christ.

And then, 3dly, or lastly, I will draw some practical Inference, and make such an Improvement of the Whole, as may be most conducive to the Purposes of Virtue and true Religion.

1st then, I am to state and consider the *Jewish* Law, Principle of Atonement, and Propitiation by Blood. In order to which, it will be proper to take a short View of the Law itself, and consider its real, original Constitution with regard to those Sacrifices. And here, I shall briefly consider, in what Cases these Sacrifices were admitted, wherein their chief Virtue or Efficacy was supposed to lie, and by what Motives the People were excited and encouraged to comply with such an Institution. With regard to the Nature and Quality of these Sacrifices, the best and choicest of every Kind

was

was strictly enjoined and insisted on by the Law. If of the Animal Tribe, they must be out of the clean Beasts, or such as had been allow'd and establish'd in common Use as the best and most wholesome Food, and such as were most valued for the Richness and Delicacy of their Flesh. And among these, it must be of the very choicest of the Kind, such as had been best fed, and most highly fattened; and no Creature could be admitted in Sacrifice that had any the least Defect or Blemish about it, whether natural or accidental; or if the Offering should be of Corn, Oil, or Fruit, it must be of the very first and best, the prime Produce of the Earth, at a Time when these Things were scarcest and dearest. For it was but fit and reasonable, that the Priests of the Lord, who made Atonement for the Sins of the People, should be richly accommodated, and supplied at all Times and Seasons with the best and choicest Provisions; and this was very particularly, and in the most special Manner, taken Care of by the Law. I have just observ'd this, by the by, because you would very naturally expect some great Advantage from hence, and that the Priests were not to be thus maintained and accommodated for nothing. And yet, I think, it is certain, that there could be no Commutation or Exchange of any Punishment under this Law, as a Favour or Matter of Grace from any of these

these Sacrifices. The Penalty, whatever it was, supposing the Offence prov'd, must be executed as the Law had enjoined, and there could be no such Thing as any Pardon, Forgiveness, prerogative Power, or Act of Grace under this Constitution. In all capital Cases, the Offender, upon legal Proof or Conviction, must *die the Death*, and no Sacrifice could exempt him. And in all lower Cases, where the Law had not provided *Death*, but some pecuniary Mulct, or personal Labour and Servitude upon Non-Payment, this Penalty was to be strictly executed, and none could plead any Privilege or Exemption by Sacrifice. Indeed, in innumerable Cases of Accident or Inadvertency, which was made penal by Law, the Sacrifice, as a Deodand or Fine to the Church, was the whole Penalty; and this was the most common Case in which Sacrifices were admitted, or where a Sacrifice was ordered with a pecuniary Mulct, one Part of the Fine was due to the State, and the other to the Church. But this, I may venture to say universally, that no other Penalty of what Nature or Kind soever, was ever taken off, or mitigated, on the Account of Sacrifice; and that the Sacrifices themselves, under this Constitution, were the most grievous Yoke and intolerable Burden that ever any Law enjoin'd. Now this being the plain and undeniable Matter of Fact, as Things stood under the Law of

Moses,

Moses, it is wonderful how our systematical Clergy should ever come to ground the Notion of a *vicarious* Sacrifice upon this *Law*, or to imagine, as they do, that ever the Life of a Beast under the *Law*, was taken and accepted of instead of the Life of the Offender. But, if they can give me any such Instance, I will become bound to them under any Penalty in the World, never to speak a Word more. That young Students and Pupils in the Schools should take up with the Opinions of their Masters, without farther Enquiry, is a Thing too common to be wondered at; but that so great a Man as *Grotius* himself should fall into this gross Error, and that so many learned Men, after the painful Studies of their whole Lives, should follow him herein, is the most surprizing Thing of all, and may serve to show how much one Man thinks after another, or rather, how very few Men think at all. Now this being so, wherein was the great Virtue or Efficacy of these Sacrifices supposed to consist under this most astonishing Institution? Why, in one Word, it consisted solely and absolutely in the *Action of the Priest*, in sprinkling the *sacrificial Blood*, which was call'd *making the Atonement*; than which, I think, there could not have been a grosser Fallacy, or a greater Imposition upon the common Sense or Understandings of Men, and which at once lets one
into

into the whole Mystery of this Piece of Priestcraft. For 'tis plain, that the Persons intitled to this Atonement, were supposed to be guilty of no Fault, after they had satisfied the Law in making their Offering or paying their Fine; which if they had not done, no Atonement could have been accepted. And I would fain know, what Atonement or Propitiation could signify under a Law that admitted of no Pardon. This, therefore, was taking out a Pardon after the Debt had been paid, and the Law satisfy'd, and owning an infinite Obligation to the Priests, for cheating them out of their Money and Substance.

But 'tis now Time to enquire, What Benefit or Advantage was here proposed or conceived of, as accruing to the People, in order to keep them easy, and reconcile them to such a Dispensation? Scarcely any Men at all, and much less such a People as this, so closely wedded to their secular Interests, and so infinitely fond of Wealth and Dominion, would have parted with such vast Revenues to a few Priests and *Levites* for nothing. The Tribe of *Levi* did not make a sixtieth Part of the whole Body; and yet it would be easy to prove, that the Church Revenues under this Government, amounted to full twenty Shillings a Pound upon all the Lands of *Israel*. But how came they to be reconciled to this? To which one might answer, in short, that they were never reconciled

ciled to it at all. Their national, establish'd Worship was so prodigiously expensive, and their *Clergy*, or Priests and *Levites*, such absolute Masters of their Property; that they took all Occasions to revolt, and were glad to serve any other Gods, that would accept them upon easier Terms. For besides all those Sacrifices and Oblations exacted by Law; and which became due upon such an infinite Number of Accidents, and unavoidable Incidents, as made these *Church Dues* in legal Mulcts and Fines unsupportable; they had a Law of Reputation among them, which obliged them to very large Donations and Bounties to the Clergy; as Free-will-Offerings. The *Jewish* Writers say, that a twentieth Part of a Man's Substance was expected in this Way, as a Matter of Credit and Honour; where the Law had no Demand at all. Among those Freewill-Offerings, human Sacrifices were look'd upon as the most efficacious and acceptable to the Lord. And tho' they were not exacted by Law, yet they were encouraged and indulged as the richest Donations, and as a Testimony of the most perfect Religion, and highest Degree of Love to God. Indeed, such Burnt-Offerings of their Sons and Daughters to Idols, and false Gods, were represented as the greatest possible Abomination: And for the same Reason, such Oblations were regarded as the highest possible

Acts of Religion and Devotion, when they were intended and given up as Sacrifices of Atonement to the *true God*. Under this Law, there were two Sorts of Vows, or Dedication of Persons and Things to God and holy Uses, the *general*, and the *special*. In the *general Vow*, the Person or Thing was dedicated to the Service of God; but yet so, as not to be exempted or taken off from the *Use of Man*. And in this general Vow of Persons or Things, there was a Right of Redemption by Law; and the Dedication having been made a Matter of Record by the Priest, whatever had been so dedicated, might, at any Time, be recovered and taken back again, paying a fifth Part over and above the Valuation: This may be seen at large, and the several Laws relating hereunto, in the last Chapter of *Leviticus*. But then, there was another Case, where the Vow was *special*, and where the Persons or Things dedicated were exempted or taken off from the Use of Man. And in this Case, whatever Person or Thing had been thus specially vow'd, must be destroy'd by *Fire*, and taken off from the *Use of Man*, as a *Burnt-Offering* unto the *Lord*. And therefore, in the Chapter just now quoted, where the several Cases of general Vows had been specified and reckoned up, with their respective Prices of Redemption, there is a parti-

particular Clause of Exception, or a Proviso added, with regard to these *special Vows*, Lev. xxviii. 28, 29. Nevertheless, or notwithstanding all this, *nothing separate from the common Use, that a Man doth separate unto the Lord of all that he hath, whether it be MAN or BEAST, or Land of his Inheritance, may be sold, nor REDEEM'D; for every Thing separate from the common Use is most holy unto the Lord. Nothing separate from the COMMON USE, which shall be separate from MAN, shall be redeem'd, but shall DIE THE DEATH.* This, I think, is plain Law, and can need no farther Comment. But, if any one should make a Difficulty where there is none, from the Law itself, the Case of *Jephtha's Daughter*, which we have recorded in the 11th Chapter of the Book of *Judges*, must put the Matter beyond all Doubt, as it comes up directly to the Point, and fully exemplifies this Statute. The Case, in short, was this: *Jephtha* being engaged in a War with the *Ammonites*, vowed a Vow unto the Lord, that if he would give him the Victory, and bring him back again in Peace and Safety, whatever *Thing*, or PERSON, should first come out of his House to meet him, at his Return, should be the *Lord's*, and that he would offer it up as a *Burnt-Offering*, Judges xi. 30, 31. The War succeeded, according to his Desire, and, upon his Return, his

Daughter and only Child came out with great Affection and Joy in a publick Manner to meet him. The insufferable Grief and Anguish of both Father and Daughter, upon this Occasion, may better be conceiv'd than express'd. But having given her, at her Request, two Months Respite, he did unto her according to the Vow which he had vowed; and, I must add, according to the express and positive Law, as already recited, and in this Case provided. But it is a most wretched Refuge that some have taken here, by saying, that this Lady was only vow'd to *perpetual Virginity*: A monstrous and ridiculous Evasion, in Defiance of the express Words of the Text, and the plain Declaration of the Law, as made and provided in all such Cases of special Vows. And besides, they forget, that there was no such Thing as Vows of Celibacy and Virginity under this Law. For, tho' such Sort of Vows are taken as a Matter of Religion, and peculiar Holiness, in the Church of *Rome*, it is well known to have been a common Reproach and Abomination in *Israel*, and an Act of Rebellion instead of Obedience under the Law of *Moses*. But a poor Evasion may be thought better than none, tho' it is often much worse. Besides, that these *Hebrews* always look'd upon human Sacrifices, from the very Beginning, as the highest and most acceptable Acts of Devotion

votion and Religion, when freely offered to the true God, is plain in the Case of *Abraham*, and in God's reserving to himself all the First-born, as well of Man as of Beasts, from the Time of their going out of *Egypt*. The Case of *Abraham* is very well known, who was commanded of God to offer up his only Son *Isaac*, the Son and Heir of the Promise, as a Burnt-Offering unto the Lord. This is a plain Proof of the common Notion, or general receiv'd Opinion of that Time, that human Sacrifices might be enjoined and accepted of God as the most valuable and meritorious Part of Obedience; and that the Blood of Man, for the Expiation of Sin and procuring the divine Favour, was much more efficacious than the Blood of Beasts. But, in the mean while, how came *Abraham* to know this, or what Proof could he give, that he had any such Revelation or Command from God? Will any of our present Clergy undertake to prove, that such a Command from God to *Abraham* can be now credible or probable to us? It may be probable enough, that either *Abraham* had such a Belief or Conceit, or that *Moses* mistook the Case; but that God, in this, or any other Case, should dissolve the Law of Nature, and make it a Man's Duty, as a Thing morally reasonable and fit, to act contrary to all the natural Principles and Passions of the human

Constitution, is absolutely incredible, and cannot possibly be prov'd. And upon such a Supposition, I defy all the Clergy in *England* to prove, that there is any such Thing as a Law of Nature, or that any Thing can be just or unjust, morally fit or unfit, antecedent to a positive Will. For, upon this Principle, I think, it is evident, that nothing can be right or wrong, fit or unfit, in the Nature and Reason of Things; but that God may command the most unfit or unrighteous Things in the World by mere arbitrary Will and Pleasure. A Supposition which must unhinge the whole Frame of Nature, and leave no human Creature any Rule of Action at all. It is no Wonder, therefore, that the Hierarchy, in all Ages and Countries, have been so infinitely fond of such a Notion, and so greedily snatch'd at this Instance, in order to set aside the Law of Nature, and substitute their own positive Laws in the Room of it. No Doubt, but every positive Law, of what Nature or Kind soever, must be just and right, supposing it to be a Command from God, how unreasonable or unfit soever it might appear to our weak, imperfect, and limited Understandings: But then, the Question is, how God should command any such Things, or what Proof could be given of it if he did? A Question, which our systematical
Divines,

Divines, and positive-Law Men, never cared to meddle with; tho' this is the only Thing they ought to speak to, if they would say any Thing to the Purpose. It is well known, that God, according to the Story, having slain all the First-born of *Ægypt*, in delivering his own peculiar People out of that Bondage, reserv'd, from that Time, all the First-born of the *Israelites* to himself, or all that first *opened* the Womb, whether of Man or of Beast. Now, here the Words of the Law, *all the First-born*, or whatever *first openeth the Womb*, must include both Male and Female of Man and Beast. And yet there are several Passages in the Books of *Moses*, which seem to restrain this Law to the Males only, and as not at all extending to the Females, either of Man or Beast, as *Exod. xiii. 12, 19, 22, 29, 34*. In which Places, and some others, the first-born Males are only mentioned, as reserv'd or devoted to the Lord; nor are Females any where expressly mentioned in this Case at all, otherwise than as they are included and implied in the general Words of the Law above recited. And therefore, that I may not enter into any doubtful Disputes, or be thought to make the worst of a bad Matter, I shall suppose, that the first-born Males only were here intended. That every Thing, whether animate or inanimate, under this Law, that was any ways reserv'd, dedicated, given, or

vow'd unto the *Lord*, was hereby made the Property of the *Priest*, is so far evident, as hardly to admit of a Debate; but, if any one should still doubt of it, the Matter is thus expressly limited and determined in the last Chapter of *Leviticus*, where dedicating, giving, or vowing any Person or Thing to the *Lord*, and making that Person or Thing the Property and Possession of the *Priests*, are all along used as equivalent Expressions. And as the *Priests*, to put the better Grace upon their most absurd and unnatural Schemes, first substituted the *Name of the Lord*, for their *own Name*; so if you substitute *Priest* for *Lord*, the Text will be every where plainer, and more intelligible; for, as soon as this is done, the whole Mystery is out, and you will be perpetually let into the Secret. When Persons or Things were dedicated to the *Lord*, upon the general Vow, or so as not to be specially excepted as separate from the *Use of Man*, the original Proprietor had the Right of Redemption, provided he would pay a fifth Part more than it was worth, that is, a fifth Part over and above the *Priest's* Valuation, who would be sure never to under-rate a Thing that might afterwards be redeem'd. But if the original Proprietor, who was likely to be the best Chapman, would not redeem it at this Rate, the *Priest* might sell it to any one else who should be the highest Bidder. But I must remember, that

that I am not now writing a *History*, but trying your Patience with a *Sermon*. And, therefore, I shall not enter into Particulars in this Case; but beg Leave only to observe to you, that this Reservation of all the First-born of *Israel*, by a special Law, as holy and devoted to the Lord, was a plain Declaration, and publick Recognition of God's original Right to them, as Sacrifices or Burnt-Offerings to atone and propitiate for the Sins of the People, and as a rightful Acknowledgment of that great and miraculous Deliverance out of *Ægypt*, in which God pacify'd his Anger with the First-born of the *Ægyptians*, when he might have destroyed them all. It was in Commemoration of this Deliverance, that the First-born of *Israel* were devoted to the Lord, as a small Victim for such a Favour, and as a Pledge of its Continuance throughout all future Generations. I must own, that this severe Law, by which were enjoyn'd such terrible Things in Righteousness, was afterwards very much mitigated, or rather repealed. For the Almighty having hereby laid in and asserted his original Claim of Right to all the First-born of *Israel*, as a just Acknowledgment for the First-born of *Ægypt*, whom he had destroy'd by way of Pacification, for the Deliverance of his People, was afterwards, as an Act of Grace, pleas'd to accept of all the Males of *Levi*, for the first-born Males of all the
other

other Tribes, as the Ransom and Redemption of their *Lives* or *Souls*. And hereby God remitted the legal Obligation of human Sacrifices, and left it to the free Choice and voluntary Oblation of his People, whether their Burnt-Offerings of this Kind should be either Male or Female, and whether they should be of the First-born or not.

Theoph. Pray, Mr. Preacher, stop a little; I can have Patience with you no longer. Your Imagination is over-heated, and you run beyond all the Bounds of Truth or Decency.

Philal. I thank you, Sir, for this seasonable Interruption. I had almost talk'd myself out of Breath; besides, I am very warm, and somewhat faint: Pray hand me a large Glass of Wine, with a little Water in it; I will drink your Health.—Here is soberly to your Conversion.

Theoph. You drink as if you were converting yourself. Will you have another Glass?

Philal. No, Sir; but the Reason of this seasonable civil Rudeness.

Theoph. The Reason, I think, need not be far to seek. Your Heat and Zeal rose so fast against *Moses* and the Law, that I thought it high Time to moderate your Passion, and give you Leisure for a little cool and sedate Reflection. That the original Claim of Right to the First-born, was
claiming

claiming them as Sacrifices or Burnt-Offerings, and that God's reserving them to himself was reserving them to Destruction, is a Point not so very clear as to need no farther Proof. But yet I can excuse it in a Friend; I take it to be only the Effect of a warm Imagination and intemperate Zeal, which you Preachers are very apt to run into. However, as I have stopt your preaching for a Minute or two, I hope you will now talk like another Man, and claim no Privilege.

Philal. You have put me into a Sort of Confusion; I wish I may recover it. Men that preach Righteousness for the Good of others do not use to be serv'd at this Rate. But to proceed; the Matter, I think, begins to clear up, and the Question between us is this, Whether the Redemption of the First-born of *Israel*, when God was pleas'd to accept the *Levitical* Males in Ransom for the first-born Males of the twelve Tribes; whether this, I say, was a Redemption from Death and Slavery, or from Prosperity and Happiness? Would the Case of the First-born, I beseech you, if they had not been redeemed or ransomed, have been better or worse? If better, they were redeemed from nothing but Good, from Life or Liberty; but if worse, you must then say, that they were redeemed or ransomed from some Pain or Penalty which they must otherwise have suffered. And what was this Pain or Punishment

ment from which they were ransomed and redeemed? Was it from serving God in the Temple, as Ministers of State, or from being the chief Servants and Attendants of the prime Ministers? Or were they redeem'd from the Rights and Liberties, the Privileges and Immunities of the *Levites*, to be rewarded with the Misery and Slavery of the common People? One would think, that Men should not be redeemed from Lordship and Dominion into a State of Vassalage and Servitude; but this, it seems, was the Case here. The *Levites*, tho' Servants in the Temple, were Courtiers with the King's Livery, and had greater Rights and Immunities than any Prince or first Magistrate of another Tribe. *Levi* was a Tribe exempted from the Jurisdiction of the Law, and protected against it, as plainly appears from the Instance of the drunken *Levite* and his Concubine in the Book of *Judges*; for whose Sakes, for what past by Night in a drunken Frolick, and an accidental, ungovernable Mob, the whole Tribe of *Benjamin* was destroyed, excepting only six hundred Men, who fled to the Mountains, and hid themselves among the Rocks. This was done while *Phineas*, the Grandson of *Aaron*, was High Priest, and by the special Direction of the Oracle after the High Priest had consulted him by *Urim* and *Tbummim* three Times. But this whole Transaction was such

such a Scene of Wickedness, Injustice and Priestcraft, that the Historian could not forbear concluding the Story with these remarkable Words, that *at that Time there was no King in Israel, but every Man did what seemed Good in his own Eyes.* But, surely, there was a God in *Israel* at that Time, and a High Priest who acted as his Vice-gerent, under the immediate Direction of the divine, infallible Oracle; but this shews, that there was no Law for Priests and *Levites* at that Time. But the Case is very plain, as I had shew'd before, that whom, or whatsoever, under this Law, was specially reserv'd by God himself, or vow'd to him by Man without an excepted Ransom, that Person or Thing was hereby made the absolute Property of the *Priest*, and he might either sacrifice, or sell as he thought fit, without any Right of Redemption or farther Account. Now under this Law, where such Forfeitures must often be made, and where the absolute decisive Judgment upon Appeal lay in the *Priest*, who had the sole Benefit by it; if there were not as many Sacrifices or Burnt-Offerings of the human Kind as there might have been, the Priest had doubtless good Reason for it, not to burn any Thing in common Cases, that would yield Money. But such a Power, tho' it might not often be executed, must make a Man as much dreaded, as the Devil himself, and as little respected. And this

in Proportion, must be always the Case, where any Body or Set of Men have an Interest separate from, and inconsistent with the Interest of the State or Society. This I take to be the true State of the Case under the *Mosaic* Economy, and by the essential Constitution of that Law. But as I may have hinted at some Things, which I have not now Time to enlarge on, I shall submit what has been here offered, to the mature Consideration of our *systematical Christian Clergy*, to whose Service I am most faithfully devoted, and for whose Sake I shall, upon any proper Occasion, be always ready to clear up any Thing that may yet seem doubtful to them.

Having thus given you a short View of *Religion* under the Law of *Moses*, so far as it relates to their Sacrifices, Atonements and Propitiations for Sin, which made a *principal Part of it*; I shall now turn your Thoughts to a more agreeable Subject, I mean, the Christian Scheme: In which, if I can but clear *St. Paul* from the Imputation of Judaism, and Christianity itself from the dead Weight of that most gross and carnal Institution, which has hitherto been laid upon it, I hope I shall not mispend your Time, or abuse your Patience; and that you will easily forgive the Freedom I must take with so good an Intention. I am, therefore, under this second general Head, to state and consider the Christian
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Doctrine of Redemption, or Deliverance from the Power of Sin and Satan by Jesus Christ. And here it is plain in general, that we are redeem'd or deliver'd from the prevailing Power and Dominion, and consequently, from the Punishment and Condemnation of Sin, by the clear Light, the powerful Motives, and the effectual Aid or Assistance which we are blest'd with under the Gospel Dispensation. This is that *Grace of God which has appeared to Mankind, by Jesus Christ, which both teacheth and enableth us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in the World.* From a State of gross Ignorance and Darkness, which had overspread the whole World, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, we are hereby recover'd to the true Knowledge of God and ourselves, or to all those moral Relations and Obligations which we stand in to the supream Being, and to one another: From a great Uncertainty concerning a future State, and the Concern of divine Providence in the Government of the World, we are furnished with clearer Conceptions, and brought to a more satisfactory Way of reasoning about these Matters: From the proud and vain Conceit of our own natural Abilities and Self-sufficiency, we are brought to the humble Sense and Acknowledgment of our natural Weakness and Inability, and of the Necessity of a divine Assistance, which

which is at the same Time promised and secured to us, upon our sincere Requests and humble Addresses to God for it. If any one should here say, that these being natural Truths and moral Obligations evident to Reason, there could be no Need of Revelation to discover them; perhaps he may have been a little too hasty in this Conclusion. The Books of *Euclid*, and *Newton's Principia*, contain, no doubt, natural Truths, and such as are necessarily founded in the Reason of Things; and yet, I think, none but a Fool or a Madman would say, that he could have informed himself in these Matters as well without them, and that he is not at all obliged to any such Master or Teacher. Our Saviour's Doctrines appeared to be the true and genuine Principles of Nature and Reason, when he had set them in a proper Light, and as soon as they came to be duly considered and weigh'd; but yet they were such as the People had never heard or thought of before, and never would without such an Instructor, and such Means and Opportunities of Knowledge. They who would judge uprightly of the Strength of human Reason in Matters of Morality and Religion, under the present corrupt and degenerate State of Mankind, ought to take their Estimate from those Parts of the World which never had the Benefit of Revelation; and this, perhaps, might make them less

conceited of themselves, and more thankful to God for the Light of the Gospel. If the Religion of Nature under the present Pravity and Corruption of Mankind, was written with sufficient Strength and Clearness upon every Man's Heart; why might not a *Chinese* or an *Indian* draw up as good a System of natural Religion, as a Christian, and why have we never met with any such? But let us take *Confucius*, *Zoroaster*, *Plato*, *Socrates*, or the greatest Moralist that ever liv'd without the Light of Revelation, and it will appear, that their best Systems of Morality were intermix'd and blended with so much Superstition, and so many gross Absurdities, as quite eluded and defeated the main Design of them. And when any one can shew the contrary, I promise to retract what I have here said, and give up this Defence of Christianity.

But the greatest Difficulty still remains, in which Christianity itself seems to be clogg'd with the *Jewish* Doctrine of Propitiation, or a penal Atonement by Blood, as a necessary Means of satisfying the Justice, and pacifying the Anger of an offended Deity. What the State of this Case was, and the natural Consequences of it under the *Mosaick* Law, I have considered already; and now I shall endeavour to shew how the Matter stands, and ought to be understood in the Christian Scheme. The Words Sacrifice, Offering for Sin, Atonement, Propitiation,

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tion, Redemption, &c. being so often used in the *New Testament* with regard to the Death of Christ, and having been commonly taken in a too strict and literal Sense, has mightily perplex'd all the Systems of Christianity, since learned Men have thought fit to make a Mystery, and an occult Science of it. But, I hope, when once this Matter comes to be duly considered, and better understood, it may not prove so great an Obstacle and Stumbling-block, as it has hitherto done. It is too plain to be deny'd, that a Misunderstanding here, and a most absurd and irrational Doctrine founded upon such a Mistake, have always prov'd in the Event the strong Hold of Sin and Satan in the Christian World; while Christians have flatter'd themselves with the Hopes of Salvation upon easier Terms than others, and upon such Terms as cannot at all consist with the Impartiality, paternal Goodness, and rectoral Justice of God, as the common Father of Mankind, and the wise and righteous Governor of the World. But before I proceed farther it will be necessary to lay down some plain undeniable Principle, such as may be securely rested on as a common Concession in this Debate, and which I take to be this: *That God in the last Day will reward or punish every Man according to his Works, or according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been morally good or evil.*

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God being no Respector of Persons, in every Nation and every Age, he that feareth God and worketh Righteousness shall be accepted of him, whether he has lived under the Gospel or not: And on the other Hand, God in the Day of Accounts will certainly reject all the Workers of Iniquity, whatever Faith they may have had in Christ, and even though they may have prophesy'd, or wrought Miracles in his Name. If there be any Thing plain and clear, either in Scripture or Reason, it is this, that God, as the common Father of Mankind, and the wise and righteous Governor of the World, will not and cannot reject and condemn any Man that makes it his chief Desire and Endeavour to serve and please him, or to know and do his Will: And on the other Hand, God will not and cannot, consistent with governing Justice, pardon the Guilty, or accept and reward a Man who makes it his principal End to gratify his Appetites and Passions, and pursues an animal Felicity in himself, contrary to the Nature and Will of God, to the publick Good, and the moral Reason or Fitness of Things. Now this being plainly the Case, I would fain know what Room or Occasion there can be for the common *Jewish* Hypothesis of Satisfaction, or how this should alter the Case, whether it be supposed or not? That God should punish the Innocent for the Guilty, and spare the Guilty,

for this very Reason, because an innocent Person has suffered what they ought to have suffered, is a very strange Doctrine; but stranger still, that such a Subversion of all moral Government, and inverting the Course of all rectoral Justice, should be necessary to satisfy that very Justice, and that there should be no reasonable Ground or Hope of Pardon without it.

That God being once offended is in himself implacable, and a consuming Fire, and that he cannot, consistent with his Nature and Attributes, pardon Sin without some Satisfaction beyond what the Offender himself was capable of making in his own Person, is, I think, the common Principle of all those who maintain this Doctrine in general. But whether this penal Satisfaction must be made in Kind, whether some Expedient may not be found out for it, by rendering an Equivalent, is a mere Trifle, and not worth debating; tho' this has been the only Difference, and Matter of Contest between the moderate and immoderate Men in the Case before us. For it is certain, that where any Satisfaction at all is necessary, God can admit of none but what is sufficient, just, and reasonable; and just and reasonable Satisfaction once offered and proposed, cannot be refused or rejected by any just and reasonable Being. And where any such just, reasonable and sufficient Satisfaction has been made,
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the Acquittment or Remission of the Penalty, or suspending the Execution of the Law, must after that be an Act of Justice, or a legal Demand, and cannot be considered as a Pardon or Act of Grace. So far as the Satisfaction is full and complete, it must intitle the Debtor or Offender to an Acquittment in Law; but where it is not thus full and complete, it can be no Satisfaction, and therefore must be a strange Sort of Equivalent, that is equivalent to nothing.

But if Christ has made a full and complete Satisfaction to divine Justice for the Sins of the *whole World*, it would be proper to declare for what Sins, and under what Circumstances of finning this Satisfaction has been made; and whether or no it has been made for Sins not repented of and forsaken. If Christ has satisfy'd the Law and the Justice of God, for Impenitency and Disobedience, this would be a great Privilege indeed, and every Man in the World would be an orthodox, systematical Christian upon this Supposition. But the Judaizers have never yet had the Face to assert this directly, whatever they may have done by plain and necessary Consequences. God has sufficiently declared, by the most numerous and express Assertions in Scripture, that he will pardon Sin upon no other Condition, but personal Repentance and Reformation; and that he will never reject or cast off a penitent, returning Sinner. And this

being the eternal, immutable Voice and Law of God in Nature and Reason as well as Scripture, the Case must be the same, whether Christ had suffer'd and died or not. And therefore our systematical, Christian Clergy, or right orthodox Divines, have only this to say, that the Death of Christ, as a Satisfaction for Sin, was necessary to enable God to pardon Sin upon Repentance, and which he could not otherwise have reasonably done. And this is saying, that God cannot remit the Punishment of Sin at all, even upon the Repentance or Reformation of the Sinner, without some prior Satisfaction or Payment from a third Person, and without which Satisfaction his Justice must exert itself in the most implacable, inexorable Revenge; and consequently, that he has no such essential Attribute as Mercy, or any Disposition to Pardon and Forgiveness in his own Nature. But our systematical Divines have been always exceedingly puzzled and perplex'd, whenever they attempt to reconcile the Necessity of a prior Satisfaction, or Payment by a Surety, with the Freedom and Gratuity of a consequent Pardon upon personal Repentance. These are the two Rocks which they always split upon, and whenever they would avoid the one, they are driven upon the other. They cannot deny that God's pardoning Mercy is free and gratuitous; and yet they must assert that

that it was purchased, and that the full Price and Value of it was paid down before it was granted. And here, our Theological Schematists so plainly rob God of his pardoning Mercy, and ascribe all the Honour and Glory of it to Christ the Surety, that it was needful to think of some Evasion or other, in order to elude and bear off the Force of such an insufferable, and most shocking Supposition. To which Purpose they have commonly urged two Things:

1st. That the Praise and Glory of our Redemption must be primarily due to God, because he contriv'd and found out this Method of Satisfaction and Pardon, which could not otherwise have entered into the Thoughts of Men or Angels. And,

2dly. Because this Method of Redemption, Satisfaction, and Pardon, was after all *Quid recusabile*; it was something that God might have refused, and have executed the violated Law without the least Mitigation or Mercy.

But, in the first Place, the remitting a Debt, or forgiving an Injury, in Mercy to the Debtor or Offender, as an Act of Grace, is a very different Thing from finding out a Surety or Friend to pay the Debt, or make complete Satisfaction for the Offence. For in one of these Cases there is Pardon or Forgiveness in the Creditor or Person injured; but in the other not. It would be Cruelty and Injustice in any Creditor, or Person in-

jured and offended, to throw a Man into Prison, and execute the Rigour of the Law upon him, when he knows that the Debtor or Offender has a Surety and Friend at Hand, who would be ready to make full Satisfaction for him, if he was but apply'd to. And this is all the Mercy these Men ascribe to God, which is really no Mercy at all, but a Piece of common, natural Justice. Not to punish without Necessity, or to remit the Penalty where the Debt, Offence or Injury may be as well compensated and satisfy'd for without it, is not Mercy, but strict Justice. As to what is farther urged, that the Satisfaction of Christ was *Quid recusabile*, and such as God might have refused; the Answer already given must here serve again: If this was a just and reasonable Satisfaction, it could not have been justly and reasonably refused; and if it was not a just and reasonable Satisfaction, it could not have been justly and reasonably accepted.

As God has every where declared in Scripture, that he will accept of Repentance; and as this is a Law founded in Nature and Reason, so this is the only Reparation that a Sinner is capable of making, or God of receiving; unless we would divest him of his natural Goodness, Compassion, and pardoning Mercy, as Attributes not at all essential to him. For if God cannot, consistent with his Justice, pardon Sin upon Repentance, without some farther

ther Satisfaction 'not in the Offender's Power; it must follow, that all our Thanks and Praises, Obedience and Love, must be due primarily and chiefly to the Person who has made this Satisfaction for us, and that we cannot receive any Thing at all as a free Gift or Act of Grace from God. And this is so plain and natural a Consequence, that they who should *worship the Father in Spirit and Truth*, do not, upon this Principle, worship him at all, but only fear and dread him under the Terror of Slaves, while all their real Veneration, Love, and Obedience are paid to the *Son*. And in Consequence of this, there are more Thanks and Praises offered up in the Christian Churches for an Atonement and Pacification of divine Vengeance by the Blood of Christ, than for all the Mercies and free Gifts we receive from God; and while we pretend to compliment the *Father of Mercies* as the free Donor of these Things, we in effect declare, at the same Time, that we are not at all obliged to him for such Favours, and that we can receive nothing good from him, but what had been fairly bought and paid for.

That the Righteousness of Christ, or the Redundancy of his Merit, could not be placed to our Account, so as to make any Part of our justifying Righteousness in the Sight of God, seems farther evident from hence, that all that was done or suffered by him was necessary to

himself, and upon his *own Account*. For having in Submission to the Will of God, freely undertaken the Work he was sent about, he was as much bound to Obedience herein, as we are in our proper Sphere and Capacity. As Christ was under a Law from God, and acted with the Prospect of a glorious personal Reward, he could not have fail'd, in any Part of his Obedience, without losing that Reward, and forfeiting the divine Favour. It is true, he obey'd perfectly this Law of God, and finish'd every Thing that was given him to do; but herein he did no more than what he was bound to, and nothing less could have been accepted from him. And, however free and voluntary the Obedience of Christ was, yet it was a necessary Obligation laid upon him by the Will and Law of God, and from which he would gladly have been excused, had his heavenly Father thought fit. He therefore obey'd, in the Point of Martyrdom, from the same Principle which every wise and good Man must always act upon, by chusing the greatest Sufferings in this World rather than disobey God, and lose the Hopes and Prospects of Futurity. Now here certainly could be no such Thing as Supererogation, or redundant Merit, where nothing was done or suffered, but under an indispensable, personal Obligation.

Christ himself seems to have had no such Notion of the Necessity of his Death,

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as a Propitiation and Atonement for the Sins of the World, and an indispensable Condition of the Salvation of Mankind, when he pray'd so often and earnestly not to be put upon any such Trial, and that if possible this Cup of Sorrow might pass from him. No Man can imagine, that Christ would have spent a whole Night in such passionate Prayers and Supplications to God, in order to prevent a Thing which he certainly knew must happen, and which had been previously agreed on between the Father and him. Would the common Saviour and Friend of Mankind have thus declin'd a few Hours bodily Pain, in a Way that many Thousands had suffer'd before him, had he thought it necessary to destroy the Power of the Devil, and to open the Gates of Heaven to a whole World of lost, undone Creatures? In short, since personal Merit and Demerit have a necessary, immutable Relation to the individual Persons themselves, and cannot possibly be communicated from one Person to another, it must be an eternal Contradiction in the Nature and Reason of Things, to suppose or say, that Christ was ever punished for our Sins, or that we are rewarded for his Righteousness: Because this would be rewarding and punishing Men without any Regard to the natural Individuality, or moral Characters of the Persons thus rewarded or punished. They who have founded this Doctrine of imputed Righteousness

teousness and Merit, upon some metaphorical Expressions of *St. Paul*, have not well considered how little this can serve their Purpose, when they come to apply it literally to the Christian Scheme. I think, I have plainly shew'd that there was no such Thing as Pardon or Forgiveness under the Law of *Moses*, that no vicarious Sacrifice was there ever admitted, and that their Notion of Propitiation, or Atonement by the Action of the Priest in sprinkling the Blood, was a mere priestly Cheat, and a gross Imposition upon the common Sense and Understandings of the People. And therefore, I cannot but look upon such Christian Schematics as in a very bad Way, who shall be still forced to build upon this Sort of Sand.

If the Deliverance of Mankind from the Power and Dominion of Satan, had been by a proper Purchase or Price of Redemption paid for them, it seems most reasonable, that the Price of Redemption should be paid to the Conqueror, who had them in Possession, whose Prisoners they were, and who thereupon pleaded a Right in them by Conquest, *i. e.* the *Devil*. It is certainly so in all other Cases of this Kind, however there came to be an Exception here. But, in Answer to this, in the present Case, it is like, it may be said, that the Devil here was only God's Goal-Keeper. Mankind having withdrawn their Allegiance from God, their rightful Sovereign,

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he hereupon charged the Devil with them: Here then they were still the Captives or Prisoners of the Lord; but upon their Revolt and Rebellion he committed them to the Safe-Guard of Satan, with strict Orders not to let them go till such Time as a sufficient Ransom, or valuable Price of Redemption, should be found or offered for them. But no such Ransom being found, God was obliged, at last, to pay himself, and to lay down the whole Price of Redemption in the Blood of his own Son. But, I am loth to pursue these Metaphors any farther, and had not taken even this Liberty, but to shew what Work, Men must make of Scripture, when figurative and allegorical Expressions come to be interpreted and applied in a literal Sense. And indeed, all Mystery in Religion is nothing else but Allegory, literally applied and understood, or which is the same Thing, misapplied and not understood at all.

What has been here offer'd, may, perhaps, be sufficient to overthrow all the Schemes and Hypotheses hitherto advanced, concerning imputed Righteousness, redundant Merit, and vicarious Sacrifices. I shall not now stand to apply this in particular to all the different Systems of our Christian Schematists, as they have variously alter'd and mended it, according to their several Fancies: But, I may observe in general, that the *Antinomians*, who carried this Principle to its natural and just Length,

Length, and took all its Consequences, constructed and put together a Scheme of Satisfaction, which was absolutely false in the Whole, and every Part of it, as contrary to both the natural and moral Perfections of God, and to the Reason of Things. But yet this System was pretty well consistent with itself, as any intire Scheme of Falshood may be: But the moderate *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, such as *Twiss*, *Hammond*, *Grotius*, *Stillingsfleet*, &c. by trying to mend it, form'd a Scheme of Satisfaction, with such a Composition of Truth and Falshood as prov'd like Iron and Clay, that would by no Means mix and hang together. For which their Adversaries, on the other Hand, have justly reproach'd them as introducing a mongrel, liny-woolsey Religion, where Men must be saved and justified, partly by the Righteousness of Christ, and partly by their own Works, or by Faith and Repentance, considered as natural free Actions of their own. And thus far they are surely in the Right, that it is absurd, unreasonable, and contradictory to suppose, that Part of the Righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, but not the Whole; and that Christ hath made a full and compleat Satisfaction for some Sins, but not for all. To say, that we are fully and compleatly justify'd by Christ's Righteousness, and yet, that our own personal Righteousness is necessary to our Justification, is a plain

Contradiction: And to say that we are justify'd and accepted partly by Christ's Righteousness, and partly by our own, is a moderating or compounding Scheme, that the *Antinomians* could never understand. For, say they, Christ will certainly be a whole Saviour or none at all; he will never suffer you to part Stakes with him, or share the Honour of justifying Righteousness with you. And here the Matter has stuck between the systematical *Nomians* and *Antinomians* of all Sorts, *i. e.* between those Christian Schematists, who having first misunderstood the Scriptures, have afterwards laboured hard to reconcile their Misunderstandings to Truth and Reason.

But, if all this should signify nothing, one Thing, I think, is very strange, that Jesus Christ, or any other Lawgiver in the World, should suffer Death to make Satisfaction and Atonement for Disobedience to himself, or to nullify and destroy the Obligation of all his own Laws. And yet, this is the Mercy of the Gospel which the Clergy are willing to allow you, in lieu of some Concessions which you ought to make them for your own Advantage and theirs. That God in the last Day will judge every Man according to his Works, and reward or punish them according to their Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been morally good or evil, is not true, in the Opinion of these Gentlemen, nor consistent with the *Grace of Christ,*

Christ, or the Rights of the Clergy under the Gospel. You may sin on as long as you please, wickedly and presumptuously against all the Laws of Christ, and yet in your last expiring Moments, receive a full and free Pardon under the Hand and Seal of Christ himself, by the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel. You may repent every Day of your Life, of all Sins *known* and *unknown*; i. e. you may daily forsake all Sin, and daily continue in the Sins which you daily forsake or repent of, and yet have as full and as free a Pardon at last, as if you had never sinn'd at all. And let any Man tell me whether this be not a Privilege, and a Privilege contrary to the Law of Nature, and directly opposite to the great Christian Law and Rule of Judgment in the last Day; and when God will award every Man according to his Works, or according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been good or bad. I may possibly assume this Subject again before we conclude; but in the mean while, this will be sufficient to shew, that the Christian Clergy will not be trusted for nothing, that they expect nothing from you without an Equivalent, and that Christ has enabled them to bear you harmless, tho' they should not be the best Preachers of moral Truth and Righteousness. And thus, while they eternally declaim against Vice and Immorality, Athe-

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ism and Infidelity, they plainly support Unrighteousness, and maintain the strong Holds of Satan in the Christian World, by giving a most false and unnatural Turn to the great Law and Rule of Judgment, as before-mentioned. But, as I see you can scarce forbear interrupting me, I must beg your Patience at present, to assure you, that this will more evidently appear afterwards, when we come to what is commonly call'd the Christian Doctrine of Pardon upon Repentance.

But, by this Time, I presume, you are ready to ask me, how it should come about, that the Death of Christ is so often spoken of, and represented in the *New Testament*, as a *Propitiation*, an *Atonement*, a *Purchase*, *Ransom*, and *Price of Redemption*, &c. Does all this signify nothing, or are we to understand nothing by it? Yes, no Doubt, there is some Meaning in it, as well as in all other figurative Expressions, Metaphors, and Allegories so often used in Scripture, both in the *Old Testament* and *New*. This, therefore, is only asking, Why Men in Compliance with the common Use of speaking, or for the Sake of Elocution, and to make the stronger Impressions upon those they apply to, should ever express themselves in a figurative and metaphorical Way? Such Forms of Speech are well enough understood in a living Language, by such as use it, but may occasion great Difficulties to Strangers,

especially in a too literal Translation, where the different Turn of Thinking and incidental Ideas in one Country, may, without any Ground from the Reason of Things, or Propriety of Speech, be transposed and applied to another. And this has been the general Unhappiness of such as are obliged to read Translations, which commonly regard only the bare Grammatical Construction of Words out of one Language into another, without Respect to the different Idioms, or ever entering into the Spirit and Design of the Author. And here the original Author being made to speak a Language which he never understood, is interpreted by Rules of Criticism which he never thought of. The different Genius of Languages, the particular Circumstances and prevailing Opinions of the People in different Ages and Countries, where such Languages have been used, and the general Motives, View and Design of an Author, are doubtless the most material and essential Points in all true and just Criticism. And hence it has commonly happened, that our greatest Criticks have been the most insufferable Triflers, and that their critical Skill hath been employed in nothing but a childish School-Play about Words, without any Regard to the History, Chronology, Religion, Policy, or any of the peculiar Circumstances of the People, whose Language they pretend to criticize upon. And from hence we find,

that Men of the best natural Sense, when they come to study such Criticks and Criticisms, are turned off their Bias, and instead of being put upon a Search after Truth, their Wits are sent a Wool-gathering. But, in the Case before us, of *St. Paul's* using so often as he does these figurative, metaphorical Expressions, as *Jewish Law Terms*, we need not go far for a Reason; since the strong Prejudices and Prepossessions of the People he had to deal with, and the Principles of Caution and human Prudence he was obliged to act upon, are very evident. It was an establish'd Principle with the whole *Jewish Nation*, that *without shedding of Blood there could be no Remission*. And they had such an Opinion of their legal, propitiatory Sacrifices and Atonements by Blood, that had *St. Paul* told them, in plain Terms, that there was nothing in it, and that they had herein been grossly abused and imposed on by their Priests, they would certainly have stoned him. But, I think, he was much in the Right not to have his Brains beat out by such a Rabble, but to save his Life for more valuable Purposes. And since they could not be satisfied but with Blood, and thought that God himself could be no otherwise satisfied or atoned, *St. Paul* had here the best Opportunity in the World to reconcile them to the Death of Christ, as a common Saviour upon their own Principles. Christ crucify'd was their greatest

Stumbling Block: This, in their Apprehensions, cut them off from all Hopes of a Deliverance by him; if he could not save himself, how should he save and restore the Nation? Now, here it may be observ'd, that this Apostle, without encountering their main Prejudice, or taking them off from the popular prevailing Expectation of a national Restauration and Deliverance, artfully applies to them, in order to bring them into the Christian Scheme, and reconcile them to Christ as their true Messiah. And here he took Occasion to put a figurative and allegorical Construction upon their legal Sacrifices, as having only shadow'd and typify'd the great Sacrifice of Christ the Messiah. So far as a bloody Sacrifice might be necessary to Pardon, they had here the most valuable and precious Blood of all. For Christ having discovered or revealed the true Religion to the World, seal'd it as a Martyr with his Blood, and died in the Defence of it, and thereby given the strongest Testimony to the Truth of it, and that he was no Deceiver or Impostor in it, and had no worldly, carnal Interest to serve; it may be truly said, in a Sense that is common enough, and very well understood, without being attended with any of the foregoing Absurdities, that the Doctrines of our Salvation cost him his Life, that he died for us, and that the Gospel, with all its Benefits, accrue to us at the Price of his Blood.

Blood. And the same Thing, in a lower Acceptation, might be said of any great and good Man who ventures his Life for his Country, or for the common Good of Mankind, and who dies in the Defence of such a Cause, and obtains the Advantages of it to the World at the Expence of his Life and Blood. And yet No-body would say, in this Case, that such an one had been offered up as a Sacrifice of Atonement to appease the Vengeance of an angry Deity, or to render God propitious to your Country, or to the World. And tho' such Terms as Redemption, Purchase, Ransom, &c. might be used in this Case, especially by one under *St. Paul's* Circumstances; yet the Metaphor being so natural and easy, ought not to be strain'd to the rigid, literal, and most absurd Sense of the *Jewish* Law.

Having thus far clear'd the Way, I shall proceed now to lay before you the true, genuine, and scriptural Ends and Reasons of Christ's Death, and therein let you see, as I go along, what are the real Benefits and Advantages which we reap from it; in which I hope to be consistent with Scripture and myself; and if I should not happen, in this Case, to be an *orthodox Christian*, I shall content myself with the Honour of being a *Christian Deist*. Christ therefore gave up his Life and Blood in the Cause of Virtue and true Religion, as I apprehend, upon the follow-

ing Grounds and Reasons, or for those Ends and Purposes.

1st, That he might hereby complete his own Obedience in the highest Instance of Submission and Resignation to the Will of God; and that he might in Consequence hereof obtain that high Honour and glorious Reward, which had been proposed to and set before him, and in the Hope and Prospect of which he acted all along. His Death was necessary or expedient upon this Account, that he might hereby exemplify and prove his own Faithfulness under the most difficult and trying Circumstances, and in Consequence of such Obedience, recommend himself to God for the highest and most distinguishing Reward. This is so evident throughout the whole *New Testament*, that it must be needless to quote particular Texts and Passages for it. Nothing can be plainer than this, that Christ had a Law given him from God, which he was bound to fulfil; and that he could not have been exempted from any Part of it without Failure of Obedience, and Forfeiture of divine Favour. And therefore his willing, chearful Obedience herein, and his absolute Submission to the Will of his heavenly Father, under the most trying and shocking Circumstances, as it discover'd the great Strength of his Virtue, unshaken Fidelity, and Love to God; so it was the Ground of all his consequent,

requent, peculiar Glory and Reward. And this certainly redounds to the immortal and unrival'd Glory of our Christian Prophet, who is the only Legislator in Matters of Religion, that ever exemplify'd his own Doctrines in Practice, or acted up to the Strictness and Purity of his own Laws. He did not, like the Heathen Philosophers, content himself with Speculations and dry Reasonings about Virtue and true Religion, and then leave this noble Cause to shift for itself, whenever it required a more painful and hazardous Defence. He did not pretend to philosophize, where he dared not suffer for the Cause of God and Religion, and for the common Good of Mankind: But after he had introduced and recommended the true Religion to the World, by his holy exemplary Life, by the intrinsic, divine Energy of his Doctrines upon the Hearts and Consciences of Men, and by his extraordinary, miraculous Works for the Good of Mankind; he stood to it to the very last, died a Martyr in the Defence of it, and seal'd its Truth with his Blood. And here I dare put the Authority of Christ, and Credit of Christianity to this Issue; against *Moses*, *Confucius*, *Zoroaster*, *Mahomet*, or any other Prophet or great Man, who may be set up in Competition with, or in Opposition to this great Prophet, and Confessor of our Religion. Let the *Jews*, the *Chinese*, the *Persians*, the

Turks, or any People upon the Earth besides the *Christians*, make it appear, that the Authors and Founders of their several Religions did not in many Instances, give up the Cause of Virtue, and the common Good of Mankind, to comply with the prevailing Prejudices of the People, and to save themselves harmless; nay, that they did not intermix and blend the grossest Absurdities in Belief, and many gross Superstitions and Immoralities in Practice, with their very Schemes and Systems of Religion. And hereby those great Men, tho' they might enlighten and reform a very considerable Part of Mankind, and do much Good in the World, yet they eluded in great Measure their own Design, while they made it plainly appear, that they had no Religion for which they thought it worth their while to suffer much, or any future Hope for which they could part with the Riches, Honours, and Prosperity of this World. This is, I think, a plain Matter of Fact, and when the contrary can be made out, the Name of Christ shall stoop and give Place to any other Name under Heaven, that can plead a better Title to the universal Honour, Love, and Esteem of Mankind. But,

2dly, It was reasonable and fit, that Christ should thus suffer and die in the Defence of the true Religion, that he might hereby evince and exemplify the universal, absolute

Authority of God, his Impartiality and immutable Righteousness, and the indispensable Necessity of Obedience, as the Terms or Conditions of Acceptance and Reward to all Persons, at all Times, and under all possible Circumstances of Action. If a Person circumstantiated as Christ was, could not be excused or exempted from any Part of that Obedience which God had assigned him, and required of him, as the Condition of his Acceptance and Reward, much less can any other Person or Persons under other Circumstances, expect the Favour of God upon any other or easier Terms. The Death of Christ therefore, and the Reason or Expediency of it, as here assign'd, was a full and evident Demonstration to the whole World, that God is no Respector of Persons, that personal Righteousness, or a personal Compliance with the Terms of Acceptance according to Men's different Capacities, and the Laws which they are under, must be absolutely and indispensably necessary, and that no Redundancy of Merit, or any personal, imputed Righteousness of another, can be ever taken in Account, as an Equivalent to this. It concerns therefore, the Patrons of redundant Merit, and imputed Righteousness, to consider well with themselves, how far their Scheme can be reconciled to this plain, natural Principle of all moral Truth and Rectitude, and yet,
still

still made consistent and intelligible; and whether they are not hereby laying a Foundation to support Iniquity by Grace, under a Pretence of honouring Christ, and doing Justice to his personal Merits and Righteousness. But whatever such Theologasters, Creed-Makers, and System-Mongers may say, or imagine, I am very well satisfy'd that there is a Day coming, in which no such Plea will be of any Avail, and in which all the Presumption, and false Hope built upon it, must fall to the Ground. And this I am as sure of, as I am that there is any such Thing as a Gospel Revelation, or that God has ever made known his Will, in any Matter at all, to Mankind, either by the Christian Revelation, or in any other Way.

When the Gospel of Salvation, or the Doctrines of Faith and Repentance, was first preach'd by the Apostles to the whole World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they had an Offer of a general Act of Grace or Indemnity for all their past Sins, which they had committed under their *Jewish* or *Pagan* State of Darkness, provided they would then come in, own Christ as a true Prophet, and obey the Will of God according to this Gospel for the Time to come. But this general Pardon, Act of Grace, or Indemnity for all past Sins was never intended to be extended farther, so as to take in all, or any wilful presumptuous Sins committed under the Gospel

pel Dispensation itself, after Men had sworn themselves to Christ, by Baptism or publick Profession, and thereby engaged themselves in the Christian Covenant: But so far from this, that no Grace of the Gospel, or Benefit from Christ, could ever be pleaded from any such Sins. *They that sinn'd wilfully or presumptuously, after they had received the Knowledge of the Truth, had no farther Sacrifice for Sin,* Heb. x. 26. That is, they could not in this Case plead that general Act of Grace or Indemnity from Christ, which they were intitled to upon their first Conversion. But the same Apostle in the same Epistle, Chap. vi. 4, 5, 6, expresses this Doctrine of Repentance and Pardon for Sins committed under the Gospel, more fully, absolutely, and clearly, in these Words: *For it is impossible that they who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they fall away, should be renewed again BY REPENTANCE; since they crucify to themselves again the Son of God, and (make a Mock of him, or) put him to open Shame.* Now it is not here said or supposed, that if a Man sins wilfully and presumptuously, or falls off from the Truth after he has receiv'd the Gospel, profess'd Faith in Christ, and experienced the great Advantage of such a Change, that it is impossible for him to repent or forsake any such Sin

or Course of Sinning, and that he can never be brought to any such Repentance: But that, supposing such Repentance, it is impossible to *restore* or *renew* him by it to the same State of an absolute, free Pardon for all past Sins; or that Repentance in this Case cannot intitle him to that general Act of Grace and Indemnity, which was granted him upon his first Conversion and Engagement in the Christian Covenant. For to suppose this would make the Gospel an Act of Grace and Indemnity for all Sinners, at all Times, and under all Circumstances, which would be the greatest Encouragement to Sin in the World; and this, I fear, has been too commonly the Case, by misunderstanding the Gospel Terms of Pardon upon Repentance. For to expect Pardon every Day upon daily Repentance for all Sins known and unknown is a most gross Absurdity and Contradiction, since this would be to repent of, that is, forsake all Sin known and unknown every Day, and yet daily continue in the same Practice. But surely this could never be the general Act of Grace or Indemnity offered in the Gospel for all *past Sins*. When once Men had receiv'd Christ by their publick baptismal Profession, and engaged themselves to a holy Life, they were never afterwards upon Breach of this Covenant to plead the same original Grace, or Indemnity, for their wilful presumptuous Sins under the

the Gospel, in Contempt of their own Vows and Covenant Engagements, when they had *crucify'd to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to open Shame.* That the Sin or Method of Sinning, which was not pardonable upon Repentance, and against which no Grace or Favour of the Gospel could be pleaded, was not, either the Sin against the Holy Ghost, elsewhere mentioned, or any total Defection from the Faith and Profession of Christianity, is evident from that Passage, 1 *John* v. 16, 17, 18. *If any Man see HIS BROTHER sin a Sin that is not unto Death, let him ask, and he shall give him Life for a Sin which is not unto Death. There is a Sin unto Death; I say not that thou shouldst pray for it. All UN-RIGHTEOUSNESS is SIN; but there is a Sin not unto Death. We know that he that is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself PURE, and the wicked ONE toucheth him not.* Now it is plain here, that the Sin unto Death, or the Sin which was not to be pray'd for, and which could not be forgiven upon Repentance, could not be the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*, which consisted in Mens ascribing the Miracles and mighty Works of Christ and the Apostles to the Power and Influence of the Devil, This being resisting the strongest and clearest Evidence, was unpardonable because it was incurable, and they who could not be convinced

vinced by such Evidence, were supposed to be absolutely unconvincible, and such as could never be brought to the Belief and Practice of Christianity at all. Nor could this *Sin unto Death*, which was not to be pray'd for, or could not be pardoned, even upon Repentance, signify or imply a total Apostasy from the Faith of Christ, or Profession of the Gospel; since it is expressly said to be the Sin of a *Brother*, or Fellow-Professor of Christ, which an Apostate who had openly renounced Christ could not be. Upon the Whole, therefore, I think, it is plain, that Sin unto Death, this sinning wilfully after Men had receiv'd the Knowledge of the Truth, or falling away after Baptism and Conversion, must signify any wilful presumptuous Sin, or Course of Sinning, under the Gospel, in Violation of a Man's open Profession and Covenant-Engagement to the Christian Faith and Practice. To put any other Sense or Meaning to these Texts, would be, in Effect, to make them signify nothing at all, or any Thing at Pleasure, as is evident from the many unnatural, forced, and constrained Constructions which our Divines or Expositors have put upon them; who by trumping their own Sense, and modern Systems upon Scripture, have in Consequence distinguish'd it away, and instead of explaining it to the Ignorant, expos'd it to the Learned.

But,

But, it must not be concluded from hence, that Repentance could be of no Avail for any wilful, presumptuous Sins committed under the Gospel, or after Men had been converted, baptized, and taken upon them the Christian Covenant. For tho' the general Act of Grace, or Indemnity, publish'd to the whole World, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, at the first Preaching of the Gospel, extended only to all Sins committed in that prior, natural State of Darkness, or under that Ignorance which God *winked at*, and could not be extended farther to any wilful, presumptuous Sins committed afterwards under the clear Light of the Gospel, and against Mens Christian, open Profession and Covenant; yet Repentance must have always this good Effect to lessen the Number of Mens Sins, and increase the Weight and Value of their good Actions in the Day of Account, when *every Man shall be judged according to his Works, or according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been good or evil*; and when Men in Consequence shall be rewarded or punished upon the Balance of the whole Account, in Proportion to their good and evil Actions, as one or the other shall be found to have prevailed in the Course of their Lives, or while they had acted in the Body. This is a common Principle of Nature and Reason, and the true Ground of all judiciary Adjustment of Accounts; and therefore, no peculiar Favour, or Act of Grace granted

granted to the *Jewish* and *Gentile* World upon their first Conversion, and taking upon them the Faith and Profession of the Gospel, could ever be judged to set aside this Doctrine, so plainly founded both in Reason and Scripture. But let us now suppose the contrary Doctrine to be true, and that what I have here advanced cannot be proved from Scripture, or fairly supported upon the Christian Principles; and let us try the Consequences of such a Supposition: And it is evident, that upon this Supposition no Scheme of Religion could ever have been contrived for a greater Encouragement to Sin, or for the Justification of the most wilful, presumptuous Sinners after the longest Course of a wicked Life, and when Men had done all the possible Mischief they could do in the World. For, after all this, a late Repentance towards the Close of a long, wicked Life, shall wipe out the whole Score, so that no former Sins shall be ever mentioned, or put to a Man's Account in the Day of Judgment. And, for the same Reason, all the good Actions of a long, serviceable Life shall be set aside, and cancelled in the Day of Accounts, if a Man should happen to turn off, and do Evil in the last Period of his Life, tho' not for an hundredth Part of the Time that he had been doing good in. But this certainly would not be judging Men according to their Works, or according to the

Deeds

Deeds done in the Body, but only according to their last Actions, or that Temper and Disposition of Mind, which upon some Accident or other they might happen to die in. But, upon this Supposition, there could not be a greater Encouragement to Sin and Wickedness, or a greater Discouragement to Righteousness and Virtue, than the Christian Doctrines of Repentance, Pardon, and the judicial Proceeding of the last Day. I have said thus much upon this Subject, in order to shew, that our Christian Divines, for at least fourteen hundred Years past, have generally mistaken these important Doctrines of Christianity, and preach'd not Christ, but another Gospel, to the unspeakable Detriment of the Christian World, and of Mankind in general. And while they continue to do this, and neither to study the Scriptures, nor the Reason of Things, but to form Creeds and Systems of Christianity out of their own Heads, accommodated to their Prejudices and Interests, it will be a vain Thing for them to cry out and complain of the Growth of *Deism*, by which they mean nothing else but *Opinions contrary to their own*, and not sufficiently calculated to the Meridian of Wealth and Power in the Church. But,

3dly, As the Death of Christ was necessary, or at least expedient, fit and reasonable to evince and exemplify the absolute Authority of God, and the indispensable Obligation

gation to Obedience in the most difficult Instances of it; so we have hereby the most encouraging Example set before us, to convince us that the Thing is possible and practicable, and that we shall not fail, in case of Need, to be assisted in it, and supported under it, as Christ himself was. This is a mighty Consolation to Persons under Affliction, or to such as may be called by Providence to suffer in the Defence of any important Truth in the Cause of Virtue and Religion, and for the common Interest of Mankind. And this is making a much better Use of the Death of Christ, than pleading the Merit of it in Exemption from the Obedience which God requires of us, or to render that Obedience available, which God had made so before by the most express Declaration, and which is really so in the Nature and Reason of the Thing. If this were not observ'd and kept to, Christians might be saved upon much easier Terms than others, and might be the greatest Sinners with all the Privileges and Immunities of the greatest Saints. But,

4thly and lastly, To put an End to this long Head of Discourse, Christ, therefore, submitted to the painful and ignominious Death of the Cross, under all the shocking and grievous Circumstances of it, that he might hereby exemplify and recommend in the most effectual Manner to the World, the
great

great Advantages and plain Necessity of an absolute Trust in, and Dependence upon God, with the Efficacy and Effect of Prayer, and the Wisdom and Importance of such a Trust in, and Dependence on God for another Life, whatever our State or Circumstances may be in this. This is a very natural and easy Notion, and must needs afford Matter of great Consolation to every good Christian. And, I cannot see any Objection it is liable to, unless it is with such as will not allow Prayer, and Trust in, or Dependence upon God, as the wise and righteous Governor of the World, to be of any Efficacy, or Avail at all to Creatures under moral Government. Some such, I know, there are, who look upon themselves to be great Philosophers, and very wise Men; and therefore, perhaps, it may not be amiss to consider the Strength, or rather the Weakness of their Cause.

“ God, say they, being infinitely wise,
“ and knowing all Things, must have fore-
“ seen, from all Eternity, every Thing that
“ could happen, as well in the moral as
“ natural World, and all the Incidents and
“ Emergencies that might arise in one, as
“ much as in the other. Therefore in
“ the one, as well as in the other, when
“ he laid the general Scheme, he must
“ have establish’d certain general Laws; for
“ being infinitely wise, and knowing all
M 2 “ Things,

“ Things, and at the same Time omnipotent, he might as well provide for the Incidents and Emergencies, or for all possible Events in the one as in the other. Therefore God, in both Cases, when he laid the general Scheme, must have fixed and settled such general Laws which should take Place in all particular Incidents and emerging Occasions, so as not to need any occasional, constant Interposition to mend the original Work, or supply the Defects of such general Laws. This, say they, must certainly argue Weakness and Want of Foresight, or some Flaw in the original Design. It will be allow’d, with Regard to the natural World, that God governs it by general Laws, such as are sufficient to direct the Whole thro’ all the Periods of its Existence, and not to oblige him to constant Attendance and Interposition, either to make new Laws, or suspend the old, upon every Accident, or particular Emergency, which not being foreseen, could not be provided for. And the same Reason holds good, with respect to the intellectual, intelligent, or moral World, which must equally be governed by general Laws, such as may ever take Place, and be sufficient to answer all particular Emergencies and Incidents of Action. It is our Duty, therefore, to acquiesce and rest satisfied with whatever happens, and

“ not

“ not to wish or desire that any Thing should
“ be otherwise; since whatever is ordered
“ and directed by the supream Being, *i. e.*
“ all Events universally, must be best upon
“ the Whole; at least we should not expect
“ that he should alter his Measures as often
“ as we may be out of Humour with Af-
“ fairs, or think fit to remonstrate and send
“ up our Petitions to the Governor of the
“ World for a Redress of Grievances. To
“ what Purpose then should you pray, or
“ desire the Prayers of others? If God does
“ not govern the World right, you should
“ plainly tell him so, and put Things into a
“ better Course and Order if you can. There
“ are no People in the World so discontented,
“ and so apt to be out of Temper upon every
“ Trifle, as these praying People. They can
“ correct even their Creator, find out Flaws
“ in God’s Providence and Government, and
“ see every one’s Faults but their own. In
“ short, God himself cannot please these
“ Saints, and nothing comes to pass as it
“ ought to do, tho’ yet, as they own, the su-
“ pream Governor is continually interposing
“ by a particular Providence in their Favour.
“ Besides, it is evident, from the Nature and
“ Reason of Things, that there can be no
“ particular interposing Providence grounded
“ upon the free Actions of Men, since there
“ can be no such Thing as free Actions;
“ but all intelligent Beings must necessarily,

“ at all Times, and upon all Occasions,
 “ think and act as they do, without any
 “ Freedom of Choice, or any Power or Li-
 “ berty of doing otherwise at the same Time,
 “ and under the same Circumstances of Ac-
 “ tion. For, it is plain, that the Will ne-
 “ cessarily follows the ultimate, practical
 “ Judgment of the Understanding, concern-
 “ ing natural Good and Evil, Happiness and
 “ Misery; and no Man can desire, will and
 “ chuse Pain or Misery as such, or reject
 “ and nill Pleasure and Happiness upon the
 “ Whole as Things shall appear to him. But
 “ this practical Judgment, concerning Good
 “ and Evil, is necessarily founded upon a
 “ Man’s Ideas, Perceptions, and the Appear-
 “ ances of Things to his own Mind; which
 “ Ideas, since they are such as are excited
 “ in, and impress’d upon the Mind from the
 “ Objects themselves, from the necessary Con-
 “ stitution of Nature, and no Man can cre-
 “ ate them, or alter them from what they
 “ really are, in the Nature of Objects them-
 “ selves, by a prior Necessity, which can-
 “ not depend upon his Will or Choice: Here
 “ therefore the whole Train of Thinking and
 “ Acting must be necessary, from first to last.
 “ The simple Idea or Perception is necessi-
 “ tated by Objects, the Judgment by the
 “ Perception, and the Volition or Action by
 “ the Judgment: And all this by an in-
 “ telligent Power acting upon the Mind, as
 “ much

“ much as one Body communicates Motion
“ to another, by a natural, mechanical Force.
“ And, to say, that Will or Choice cannot
“ be really Will or Choice, or that it can-
“ not be acting at all, unless it is free, not
“ only from external Violence, Compulsion,
“ or Coaction, but even from this internal
“ Principle of Reason, or Motives, as ap-
“ pearing to the Mind, is to beg the Ques-
“ tion, and to assert a Thing that can neither
“ be understood nor proved.”

I have thus far argued in the Person of one of these modern Sophists, and so far as I know have fairly represented the whole Strength of the Cause. But the foregoing Piece of Reason and Ridicule contains such a Mixture of Truth and Falshood, that the several Members of it cannot be distinctly view'd, till they are taken abroad, and considered apart; and when this is done, it will be found, that a weaker Compages of Discourse could hardly have been put together with any plausible Appearances or Grounds of Probability. I grant, therefore, that God governs both the natural and moral World by stated general Laws, and that he does not alter, set aside, or suspend these Laws upon particular Incidents, or occasional Emergencies. And it must likewise be granted, that the Prayers and Addresses which are often sent up to him, as the supream Governor of the World, are nothing else but the private

Uneasinesses and personal Discontents of the Suppliants, who might, perhaps, be as much displeas'd with any Thing else, and know not what they would have themselves, or what would content them. Here, therefore, it would be as unfit or unreasonable for God to regard such Prayers and Addresses, as it would be for him, in all other Cases, to depart from, or give up his general Principles of Action, and Laws of Government, only to gratify the peevish Humours, or mistaken Interests of weak and ill-natur'd Creatures.

But here, perhaps, it may be said, that by these Concessions, I have given up the whole Point: For, if God governs both the natural and moral World by stated general Laws, not to be altered or suspended upon particular Occasions, or arising Incidents, it must then follow, that there can be no Room at all, or Reason to be assign'd for any particular, occasional Interposition, or for any constant, continued Power, Presence, or Action of God in the Government, either of the natural or moral World. But, whatever such a Philosopher may imagine, the true State of the Question here, is not whether God governs both the natural and moral World by stated, general Laws; but whether he governs the World at all or not? Or, whether he has not made a World under such general Laws, or such natural, inherent Properties and Powers of moving and acting, as
to

to be able, for ever after, to govern and support itself, without any farther Presence, Influence, or Operation of God upon it? And this is a Point of too great Consequence to be pass'd over without farther Inquiry. For I must say it again, that the Question here, is not whether God governs the World by general Laws, but whether the World does not support and govern itself by certain inherent, essential Powers and Properties in the Things themselves? And this, in Truth and Reality, is the Question between Deists and Atheists, and not between Christians and Deists, as has been always foolishly and most absurdly supposed. The Christian *Jews*, or *Jewish* Christians; namely, they who have laboured to found Christianity upon Judaism, have always had two Sorts of Adversaries, who have proved very dangerous to them, *i. e.* the real Deists upon the Christian Scheme, and the real Atheists, who are in no Scheme of Religion at all. And by confounding these two essentially different Principles and Characters, they have weakly betrayed, exposed, and even utterly subverted their own Cause.

But to return to the main Point in Hand; since the natural and moral World, or Parts of the Creation, are essentially distinct, and must consequently, if they are governed at all, be governed by Laws which are essentially distinct and different from each other, it will be proper to consider them apart, by
which

which you will have a clearer and more distinct View of the whole Matter. It is plain then, that as the material World, or System of Bodies, is void of all Thought, Intelligence, Design, or free Agency, it must be governed and directed by the Laws of necessary, and mechanical Force, independent of all Intelligence, Will, or Choice in the Subject thus governed and directed. But on the other Hand, as the moral World consists of Subjects capable of Intelligence, Will, and Choice, they must be governed by the Laws of intelligent Action, Will, or Choice: For it is plainly, as impossible to govern the moral World by the Laws of necessary, extrin-sick Force, as it would be to govern the natural World, or System of Bodies, by the Laws of intelligent Self-Motion. Now all this being too plain to be deny'd, let us see whether the necessary Consequence of it will not be, that God governs the natural and moral World, by his constant, uninterrupted Presence, Power, and incessant Action upon both, and not by any such essential, inherent Powers or Properties in the Things themselves, as might set aside the continued Presence, Power, and Agency of God as unnecessary, or as having nothing to do in the Government of either the natural or moral World. It is supposed, therefore, in this Scheme, that the natural World, or System of Bodies, having been once created, dispos'd
into

into their proper Order, and indued with certain Powers, Properties, and general Laws of Motion, must afterwards continue to exist and move on upon such general Powers, Properties, or Laws, without any farther Presence, Power, or Operation of the *first Cause*. But if these natural, inherent and essential Principles, Properties, or general Laws, can sustain and govern the World without God, or without the continued Agency of the first Cause; I would fain know why they might not have created the World at first, or why they may not be as well supposed to have been eternal, necessary, and independent of any Cause at all. If this material World, or System of Bodies, be supposed capable of continuing in Existence, and persevering in its own Motions, upon its own Laws and essential Powers and Properties, but for one Moment, without the necessary Presence, Power, and Operation of God upon it, the same might as well be supposed for any longer Time; and so, *in Infinitum*, forward and backward, from Eternity and to Eternity. And this being once supposed, to say afterwards, that such a System must require the Power and Agency of God to give it Existence, to indue it with those general Laws and essential Properties, and to put it into Operation at first, would be a needless and a groundless Assertion, a Thing for which, upon this Hypothesis, there could be

no Necessity, and for which no Reason can be assign'd. Preservation therefore, or the Support and Continuation of Existence and Motion, is as necessary an Effect of God's Presence, Power, and Action, as Creation itself; and to say otherwise, would be to assert and maintain a Thing without the least Reason or Possibility of Proof. Now when these Gentlemen had discharged God from the Government of the natural World, and supposed that the System of Bodies once put into Existence and Motion, was sufficient in itself to continue in that Existence, and to persevere in those Motions, without any farther Occasion or Necessity of the divine Presence and continued Energy upon it; it was after this very natural to relieve God from the moral Part of Government, and to reject the Doctrine of his Providence, as an unphilosophical Thing. I must own, indeed, that many great and celebrated Philosophers, who have run into the former Absurdity, have yet most religiously adhered to the Doctrine of Providence and moral Government. But then it must be said at the same Time, that they had given too much Ground and Encouragement for others to come after them, and complete a Scheme which they had only begun and left imperfect. This has been the Case in Fact, and it is not at all surprizing that the *moral Atheist* should arise out of the *natural one*, and constitute a Creature all of

a Piece. Thus when Men will be learned beyond the Measures of Sobriety, they must run into Schemes and Methods of philosophizing equally absurd and irreligious. For God, according to these Philosophers, makes and governs a natural World that is capable of governing itself, and that might have made itself as well, had they not pass'd a needless and insignificant Compliment upon the Creator. But I hope they will mend their Scheme, and compound this Matter for their own Honour, and not pretend to say, that God has made a necessary World, or a self-existent System of Creatures. Yet this is the philosophical Scheme of Atheism, which its Patrons would fain call Deism, and in which the Christian *Jews* or *Jewish* Christians assist them, by joining inadvertently in the same Cry. But if this be not a fine Scheme of Philosophy, let Christian Deism stand for an odd Sort of Religion, and let the Christian *Jews* be for ever orthodox, and be allow'd as the only religious Men in the World. It is certain, that if God governs moral Agents at all, he must govern them by Hope and Fear, or by such a wise and suitable Application of Rewards and Punishments, as the different Circumstances of Persons, and the Ends of Government require. And these Rewards and Punishments must be such as are not the natural, necessary Consequences of the Actions themselves,

themselves, since every one must see that this would be no Government at all, and that the Case, in this Respect, must be the very same whether we suppose any rectoral Justice, or any Presence or Operation of God in the World or not. And yet this which is really no Government at all, is all the general Providence which some seem willing to allow. But since those Gentlemen are all deep Philosophers, and above the gross Ignorance of the common Herd, I would here only ask them, What are the Laws of Nature? What is the Law of Gravity, the Law of communicating Motion from one Body to another by Impulse, and the Law of the *Vis Inertiae* of Bodies? Are these natural, essential and inherent Properties of the Bodies themselves, or are they the regular Effects of some universal, extrinseck Cause acting incessantly upon the whole material System, by such and such general Laws and Conditions of Agency? As soon as these Philosophers have answered this and such like Questions, they will change their Principles, and mend their Systems; and till they have done this, one may venture to leave them where they are. But it seems, the main Strength of this Cause lies in the Fatalism and Necessity of all Actions, whether they are divine or human, of God or Man. “ For, “ since every intelligent Being must necessarily think and judge, as Things necessarily

“ fairly

“fairly appear to his Mind or Understanding, and necessarily act as he thinks or judges concerning natural Good or Evil, Happiness or Misery, it must from hence plainly follow, that no Action can be free; and therefore every Thing that can be either thought or done, must be equally right, or equally wrong; or, which is the same Thing, nothing can be either right, or wrong.” But who told these Gentlemen this, or who made them so wise? Not God, I am sure; for they scorn any Communications from him. And therefore they do not necessarily think and act as they do from the Nature and Reason of Things. But if they are not wiser, they cannot help it, and they would certainly do better if they could; and consequently, it must be contrary to the Nature and Reason of Things, either to reward or punish them, or to take any Notice of them at all. And as this is the necessary Consequence of their own Scheme, I think it to be an innocent, harmless Consequence enough, and should have taken them upon their own Terms, if they had never set up for Philosophers and wise Men. But as they would claim upon their own Principles, Merit against Merit, and Praise where they confess none can be due, I must beg Leave to debate the Matter a little farther with them.

“The Mind of Man, say they, allowing
“for Intelligence and conscious Action, is

“ governed upon the same Principles and
 “ Laws with Matter. A Body impressed
 “ by two contrary equal Forces, as a Ba-
 “ lance by equal Weights, must necessarily
 “ rest *in Equilibrio*, and cannot move at all,
 “ either this Way or that. But Reasons and
 “ Motives of Action have the same Force
 “ and Operation upon the Mind, and there-
 “ fore the Mind under contrary equal Rea-
 “ sons and Motives of Action must remain
 “ quiescent and not act at all.”

Let us here then suppose the Reasons and
 Motives of Action to be equal on both Sides,
 when a Question is proposed to and debated in
 the Mind, whether a Man shall speak or be
 silent, stay or go, sit or stand, where either of
 them must be free voluntary Actions, and de-
 pend equally upon the Will or Power of Self-
 Determination; and in this Case, upon the
 present Hypothesis, where all the Reasons
 and Motives of Action are equal on both
 Sides, a Man could neither speak nor be si-
 lent, sit nor stand, stay where he is nor go
 away; though, at the same Time, he must
 necessarily do one of them, and both would
 be equally acting, or a Self-Determination
 under the Command of the Will. The Sup-
 position therefore that the Mind, in this Case,
 would be in the State of a Balance, or of a
 Body impressed by two contrary equal For-
 ces that must absolutely rest, and could nei-
 ther move this Way or that, is false, absurd,
 and

and plainly contradictory. But here it will be said, that such an Action could be of no Consequence or moral Consideration at all, since it would be perfectly indifferent upon this Supposition, whether a Man should act or not act, *i. e.* perform or forbear an Action thus proposed to the Mind. Which is true; but then it demonstrates the Power of Self-Motion or Self-Determination independent of all Reasons, Motives, or Excitements to Action *ab extra*, which is all I would prove by it.

But let us now suppose an Action to be moral, and of the utmost Consequence, with respect to Pleasure or Pain, Happiness or Misery. And I say, *That no wrong Judgment or Practice in this Case can be necessary; or that no Error, either in Judgment or Practice can be invincible from any Perception of Ideas, or Relation of Ideas in the Mind.* The whole Fallacy here, lies in confounding *Perception* with *Judgment, Opinion, or Belief.* PERCEPTION is the immediate Self-Consciousness of Ideas in the Mind, or of the natural Relation of one or more Ideas as existing in, and appearing to the Understanding. Perception therefore is as necessary as the simple Ideas excited in the Mind, or the necessary, natural Relation of those Ideas, which cannot be altered or made otherwise by any Power of Will or Choice. But Judgment, Opinion, or Belief is a quite different Thing; for this is an Act

of the Mind, by which it joins or separates Ideas in mental or verbal Propositions. And this joining and separating Ideas in mental or verbal Propositions, or in Judgments, Opinions and Beliefs, may be either agreeable to their real Existence and natural Relations in the Mind, or contrary to all such natural Relation, real Existence and Appearance of Ideas to the Understanding, or such as cannot possibly exist, appear, or be perceived there. In one Case the Judgment is right, or agreeable to the real Existence and natural Relation of Ideas in the Mind: In the other Case, the Judgment as express'd in the Proposition is wrong, and the Ideas under such Relation as express'd in the Proposition, cannot possibly appear to or exist in the Mind, or any Ways be perceiv'd there. Whatever is properly natural and necessary, is for that Reason right and cannot be wrong, otherwise than as Nature itself is wrong, and founded upon Principles of Deception. And therefore no body ever talks of wrong simple Ideas, wrong Perceptions, or wrong natural Relations of Ideas, as existing in the Mind, and really appearing to the Understanding. I assume it here as a Postulatum, or rather an Axiom, that what is not really in the Mind, cannot appear there, and that no Man can perceive any natural Relation of Ideas where he has really no such Ideas, or where those Ideas have

no such Relation one to another. If the Judgment or Opinion formed into Propositions, went no farther than the Perception, or real Existence or Relation of the Ideas themselves, as appearing to the Understanding, any such Judgment or Opinion must be as necessarily true and right, as the real Existence and natural Relations of those Ideas and Perceptions in the Mind, and no Man can form a wrong Judgment, but by putting something in the Conclusion, that was not in the Premises; and then affirming that he sees what he does not, and cannot possibly see. A Man, in this Case, sees and perceives that Truth is Falshood, and Falshood Truth, that Light is Darknes, and Darknes Light, and that there is really no such Thing as Truth and Falshood, no Difference between them, or no Power in the Mind of perceiving and distinguishing them one from the other. But the Fallacy of this whole Scheme lies in confounding Perceptions, Ideas, and the natural Relations of Ideas as they necessarily exist in the Mind, and make their Appearance to the Understanding, with Mens Reasonings, Judgments, and Opinions about them, as express'd in Propositions, and supposing the latter to be necessarily connected with, and founded in the former. But this is absolutely false and impossible; and he who would maintain it, must assert, that there

is no such Thing as Truth different from Error and Falshood, or no Power in the Mind of perceiving and distinguishing them, or that Error and Falshood are founded upon the same natural necessary Principles with Truth itself.

A Man makes a wrong Judgment, and precipitates himself into some practical, hurtful Error, and when he is convicted of it, or comes to see the Evil in its Consequences, he pleads in his own Excuse, that he really thought it to be true, and that it appeared so to his Understanding. Now that he really *thought so*, that is, that he really made a *wrong Judgment*, and consequently, must act wrong, the Judgment being supposed, is very true; but that the Thing really appear'd so to his Understanding, or that this wrong Judgment was founded in, and necessarily connected with any Ideas or natural Relations of Ideas actually present to his Mind, and perceiv'd there, is false and impossible, for the Reasons already assign'd. I readily grant, that the moral Act flows from, or is necessarily connected with the practical Judgment concerning the natural Good or Evil of Actions. But if this practical Judgment be not the very imperate Act of the Will itself, it is at least so intimately related to, and conjoin'd with it, that I believe any Man, by Reflection on himself, and the Operations of his own Mind, will find

find it very difficult to separate or distinguish them one from the other. To say, therefore, that the *Will* necessarily follows the *practical Judgment*, is only, in Effect, saying that the Will, which Way soever it determines, necessarily supposes the Will under that Determination, or that a Man cannot will and nill, chuse and refuse the same Thing at the same Time. Which is doubtless true, but nothing at all to the Purpose, and can serve only to turn the Argument into Jest and Ridicule. And yet this gross Darkness and Confusion of simple Ideas and Perceptions, with practical Judgment and moral Action, is the great Strength of Fatalism, and the clearer Light of intelligent Machines.

I have been the larger upon this, as being a Matter of such infinite Consequence to Mankind. For in this Liableness to but Non-invincibility of Error consists probational Liberty, or the Liberty of a Creature in a State of Trial, in Consequence of the good or ill Use of which Men will be accountable for their Actions, and be accordingly rewarded or punished by the wise and righteous Governor and Judge of the World; and I have treated this Subject in a philosophical Way, as knowing that I could have no Adversaries here, but such as are Men of some Parts and Subtilty in Speculation. And for this Reason I have contracted the Argument

into as narrow a Compass as I could, that if any one should think fit to answer me, he need not be at much Pains about it.

And now I can give you the Comfort to let you know, that I am come to the Application, and shall not detain you upon this Subject above an Hour longer; or only while I can draw a Corollary or Scholium or two from what has been said, which in this sermonizing Way, I must call practical Observations, Reflections, or Inferences.

First then, from hence we may see, that there is a certain infallible Criterion, whereby to distinguish between Superstition and Religion, or which is the same Thing, between true and false Religion. And that is the great Rule of Judgment, which God will proceed upon with all Mankind in the last Days, when he will Reward or punish Men according to the Deeds done in the Body, or as their Actions have been agreeable or disagreeable to the eternal, immutable Law or Rule of moral Truth and Righteousness. All Doctrines which necessarily suppose, or imply this Principle, are true, original, Christian Doctrines. But all Doctrines and prevailing Opinions which suppose and imply the contrary; as that God, in the Day of Retribution, will reward or punish Men for the Actions of others, which are not their own proper personal Actions, such as the authoritative Action

tion of the Priest in saleable Pardons, Indulgencies, Absolutions upon a Death-Bed, &c. or by the redundant Merits and Righteousness of Christ, which is always a Fund of Property in the Priest's Hands to be disposed of, as he shall direct; I say, all such Doctrines and Principles of Practice, are certainly the corrupt Dregs of Judaism, and as such to be rejected and condemn'd by whatsoever Weight of Authority, or Prevalency of Custom they may have been receiv'd and adher'd to. This is the first and great Principle of Christianity, and of all true Religion; as the Christian Deists will certainly be able to prove against all the Efforts and Struggles of the Christian *Jews*. I am sure that this is the Scheme which must support the Authority of God, and keep up the Awe and Influence of his governing Justice, and moral Perfections, in the World. And yet it is more than possible, that some Men will endeavour to spiritualize their private Interests, and represent me as a most wicked, ungodly Wretch, for setting aside any Doctrines that are very profitable to them. We always see, that no commonly-receiv'd Tenets in Religion can be openly attack'd; but the *Ephesian* Silver-Smiths or Crafts-Men, who claim a Property in these Opinions, are presently in an Uproar: And when their Passions are thus raised and warmed, they will run together in Tumults, crying out,

O Revelation! O divine Religion! O sweet, inestimable, precious Gain! Or which is the same Thing, Great is *Diana* of the *Ephefians*, whom all *Asia* and the World worship. But, I hope to do even these Crafts-Men more Justice than ever they have done the rest of the World. And therefore, in my Opinion, Christianity, both in its Doctrines, and Ministry or Method of propagating them, must certainly appear to be a very consistent, rational Scheme, and a most wise and excellent Constitution, when it is once clear'd from those Dregs of Judaism, which have been retained in, and mixed with it. But when this is done, there will be nothing left that can be of any Advantage to the political, hierarchical Clergy, but a *good Life*, or the universal Practice of moral Truth and Righteousness. And this I am sure must give some of them very gloomy Apprehensions, and they cannot, upon such Occasions, forbear discovering the Consternation they are under. But to conclude this Head of Discourse, I take it as certain, that every Doctrine which supposes the absolute Necessity of moral Truth and Righteousness, and of nothing else, in order to Happiness, is from God, and bears the Stamp of divine Authority. But any Doctrine which will not stand this Test, can be no Part of true Religion, or real Christianity, but must owe its Original and
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Credit to the Policy and Artifice of some, and the Ignorance and Superstition of others.

2dly, From hence we may see, how we are to understand, that common Distinction between the Religion of the *End*, and the Religion of the *Means*: A Distinction which tho' always made, is, perhaps, seldom understood. Now it is, I think, very plain, or, at least, I shall venture here to take it as a Postulatum, that all Means of God's Appointment must have a natural Relation to, and Connexion with the End, and be necessary in the Reason, Fitness, and mutual Dependency of Things, to obtain such an End; or otherwise, it would be no Means at all, or no special, necessary Means of divine Appointment, which is the same Thing. And to suppose, that God would institute special Means, which have no special Relation to the End, or any rational Connexion with it, is to suppose him an arbitrary Being, and that his Laws are not founded upon Reason, Wisdom, or moral Fitness, but upon mere absolute Will and Pleasure.

But this, as plain as it seems, will doubtless be disputed, even by Protestants, and the external, ritual Part of the two Sacraments, as they are call'd, will be urged to the contrary. I think, no Man can pretend to say, that there is any rational Connexion either natural or moral, between these external Rituals,

tuals, and any internal Virtue or true Religion, either in Act or Habit. Who will say, that washing the Body with Water can be any natural, rational Means of purifying the Soul, or purging the Conscience from Sin and dead Works, or that the elementary Part of the Eucharist can have any such Tendency to convey Grace, to strengthen the inward Habit of Virtue, or to seal and confirm to Men the great Blessings and Rewards of Christianity?

But, I must beg your Patience a little longer, *Theophanes*, tho' I have just done. I know you are ready to say, that since Christ hath plainly instituted the Baptism of Water, and the elementary Commemoration of his Death and Sufferings in the Eucharist, for any one after this to suppose or maintain, that Christ will not bless his own Institutions, or that he hath instituted needless or ineffectual Means, is plainly to impeach his Wisdom, and renounce his Authority, or which is the same Thing, it is declaring against Christianity itself. Now this Objection, I must own, would be very strong, and even unanswerable, upon Christian Principles, was it founded upon a right Supposition. But the quite contrary here happens to be true, and if any Priest in *England* should affirm otherwise, I must demand his Proof. For, I say, that the external, elementary Parts of either of the Sacraments, were not instituted
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by Christ, and cannot, therefore, properly speaking, be Christian Institutions. Both these Sacraments, *as we call them*, were in use before, as national Rites, Usages, or Customs among the *Jews*. And here they were equally observ'd by all Men, or by the whole Nation good or bad, and were never annex'd to any moral Character. Nor did ever the Priests in this true Church of *Israel*, how corrupt soever they might otherwise be, pretend to purify the Soul, to convey the Grace of God, or to alter the moral Characters of them by these external Rituals and Ceremonies. But here the Christian Priests infinitely outdo their archetypical Predecessors, and pretend to mechanical Means of eternal Life and Salvation which the *Jewish* Priests never understood.

I see you are very impatient, *Theophanes*; but pray here me out. Your Interposition would make this Discourse the longer, which in all Conscience hath been too long already. That the Baptismal Water therefore, and the elementary Bread and Wine, were in use before, as national Rituals, or Usages among the *Jews*, I shall not attempt to prove, till any learned Christian will deny it: And till this is deny'd, it must necessarily follow, that these were not Christian Institutions. It was the Manner of the great Prophet Jesus, in all his moral Discourses to the People, to spiritualize and apply to a religious Purpose, not
only

only the national Customs of the *Jews*, but even the most common Occurrences of Life and Appearances of Nature. And thus he occasionally calls on them to contemplate and consider the Ravens, the Sparrows, the Lilies of the Field, the Grass and Corn, the Winds, Rains, and Tempests, the Rocks and Sands, &c. From all which very useful Observations might be made, and Instructions drawn, for the moral Conduct of Life. The Custom which had obtain'd among them, of baptizing their Profelytes, as a Symbol of national Purity, and of handing about Bisket and a Cup of Wine after Supper, our Lord in like Manner sanctify'd and apply'd to a religious Use; but without connecting them with personal Holiness, or making them the Means of Grace, or Conditions of divine Favour, any otherwise than as all such spiritual Applications and religious Uses of Things natural and temporal might be. The Papists, therefore, had they thought fit, instead of seven might have made seventy Sacraments; nor can the Protestants have any Reason to confine them only to two, as elementary Means of conveying spiritual Grace. Extream Uction, or anointing the Sick with Oil, in order to their Recovery, is as much a divine Institution and Command, as any Thing of like Nature can be, and has as good a Title to a standing, sacred Ordinance in the Church, as any other external Ritual,

or instituted Means. And yet no Protestant would allow, nor is it agreeable to the moral Reason and Fitness of Things to suppose, that this is necessary to God's hearing and answering Prayer for the Sick, or that Prayer would not be available without it. But where any such Practice or Custom hath taken Place, and prevail'd under a certain Signification, or to such or such a particular Purpose, in this Case the Observation of it will be advisable in Point of Decency, as a Matter of Reputation, and to avoid Scandal in the Imputation of Singularity. Affected Singularity is every where, and at all Times disreputable, as it is a natural Mark of Pride, Vain-glory, and a Contempt of others. And there can be no Doubt but our great and holy Prophet, had he liv'd now, would have comply'd with and continued all innocent Customs, whether natural or legal, and endeavour'd to apply them to a religious Purpose, as he did in his own Time and Nation. But to argue from hence, that such national Customs and Usages were divinely instituted, as necessary Means of Grace, would be very absurd and ridiculous.

But, to prevent all Mistakes, and set this Matter in a clearer Light, we ought here carefully to distinguish between the eternal, immutable, and the temporary, occasional Laws of God and Nature. The great Rule of Rectitude, or the Law of moral Truth and Righteousness in general, is of eternal, unchange-

unchangeable Force and Obligation to all rational, intelligent Beings alike, and cannot under any possible Circumstances be dispensed with, or set aside. But particular Actions, which are necessarily connected with this general Law, and make a Part of it at one Time, and upon such or such Suppositions, may not be, at another Time, upon other Suppositions, and under different Circumstances. And from hence it necessarily follows, that such occasional Laws, tho' they are natural Laws, and binding as such *pro hic & nunc*, yet they cannot be of eternal, immutable Obligation, but must be altered and varied from Time to Time, according to the occasional and mutable Relations and Circumstances of Persons and Things.

Every Law, so far as it is binding, or while it continues in Force, must be founded in Nature and Reason, and there neither is, nor can be any other obligatory Law. For tho' the greatest Iniquities, or grossest Absurdities may be establish'd by Law, *i. e.* by Force or Power, yet this alone cannot make them right or reasonable. And, therefore, to ascribe any such Laws to God, under what Pretence soever, is to renounce his Sovereignty, and to declare against the Righteousness and Equity of his moral Government. And from hence it is plain, that no occasional Laws can be of eternal, immutable Obligations, unless we could suppose the
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Situation, Relations and Circumstances of Men in Society unalterable. And from hence all wise States and Governments have ever found it necessary to abrogate and alter the old, or to re-enact new Laws, according to mutable and variable Relations and Circumstances of Persons in Society. And this will equally hold good, when applied to the Laws of God himself, as the Laws of Nature and Reason must be always his Laws, or agreeable to his Will. For what God would require at one Time, under such particular Relations and Circumstances, he would not require at another Time, under other Relations and quite different or contrary Circumstances.

It could never, therefore, be the Will of God, that any national, civil Law, with regard to the Conduct of Men in Society, should be unalterable, while the Circumstances and Relations of Persons and Things, and consequently the Reasons of Action are so very mutable, and continually changing. And from hence, it may be questioned, whether the *Mosaick*, political OEconomy, especially the positive and ritual Part of it, as a Matter of divine Institution, could be made of perpetual, immutable Obligation, under the infinitely different and mutable Circumstances of that People in all their successive Generations? This surely is not agreeable to the Method of God and Providence, in any other State or OEconomy; and such a Constitution
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must

must necessarily dissolve and destroy any other Society and Government, as it did that. And the plain Reason of this national Destruction, was the Stiffness and Obstinacy of the *Jews*, in adhering to the literal Sense of the Law, which *St. Paul*, as I have prov'd, utterly renounces and disclaims.

Theoph. You seem, by your long Pause, to have done preaching.

Philal. I have so, and if you can forgive me this long Sermon, I will faithfully promise you never to preach another.

Theoph. I shall pardon you upon no such Terms. A Man cannot atone for doing an ill Thing, by promising never to do a better. If you have unluckily mis'd the Truth in a long Predication now, you ought, however, to exercise the same Talent once more some other Time, and endeavour to mend it.

Philal. I never expect to mend any Thing in the preaching Way: But, however, I am content to submit this Essay of that Kind, such as it is, to your Correction.

Theoph. I must own it is an Original of the Kind, and think you have taken the right Way to have it heard out, by not suffering the Audience to be more in Number than the Preacher. But, since you submit it to my Judgment, I must tell you freely, that I am not able to reconcile your main Doctrine to the Scripture Account of Christ's Death and Sufferings. It is very plain and undeniable, that
God

God hath declared himself reconcileable in the Gospel and offer'd eternal Life and Happiness to Mankind, by or through Jesus Christ, as a Sacrifice for Sin. But, how he should be a Sacrifice for Sin, without any Atonement, Propitiation, or vicarious Substitution, I cannot perceive. Could this Matter be once clear'd up, the State of Religion in the Scripture Account of it, would be plain and intelligible enough: But till this is done, the Doctrine of the *New Testament* concerning Christ, must, in my Opinion, remain very much in the Dark. Now here, your denying the Sacrifices under the Law to have been propitiatory, atoning or vicarious, is so far from explaining the Matter, that it leaves *St. Paul's* Doctrine of Christ the more obscure and unaccountable. For, to what Purpose doth *St. Paul* every where represent and speak of the Death of Christ as a Sacrifice for Sin, if it was not really so, or what could such figurative Expressions signify, but to puzzle and perplex the Christian World, as if they had been design'd on Purpose to cloud and darken the Scriptures?

Philal. You urge the Objection home, and have offer'd, in short, the Sum of all that is commonly said in favour of the vicarious, sacrificial Scheme; but, I think, this Objection and Way of Reasoning had been sufficiently obviated before, had you taken Notice of it, or attended to it. For if there

was no such Thing as a vicarious Sacrifice under the Law, or no Commutation of Punishment admitted in any Case at all, it is plain, that *Paul* could not refer to any such Practice, or suppose the Death of Christ to be analogous to something under the Law that had never existed, not so much as in Supposition. And therefore the Christian Priests, who have introduced this Notion of a vicarious, penal Sacrifice, have run into grosser Absurdities, and more dangerous Errors concerning it, than ever the *Jewish* or *Pagan* Priests had done. But, as this is a Matter of great Consequence, it may not be amiss to consider the Business of Sacrifices a little farther, as the Case stood from the Beginning, both among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The Word Sacrifice, in its most general Acceptation, signifies something offered to God by a free and voluntary Act of Obedience to his Will, and with which God is well pleased and disposed to favour the Person, as by such Sacrifice or free Obedience God's Sovereignty and supream Jurisdiction is acknowledged and submitted to.

From hence it is evident, that to bring any Act of Obedience under the proper Notion of Sacrifice, something must be resign'd and given up at the Command of God that was dear and valuable to the Owner, Possessor, or Enjoyer of it, and which he would not have parted with, but in Obedience to
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the Will of God, as an Acknowledgment of his supream Authority, and absolute Right of Commanding. And therefore the Acts of Charity, Bounty and Munificence, when Men part with their Property, Ease or Pleasure, for the Good of others, to promote the Happiness of Society, and especially to maintain the Honour of God, or the Credit and Interest of Virtue and true Religion in the World; these are the most acceptable and valuable Sacrifices of all, as they are the most natural and direct Means of pleasing God, and of continuing or regaining his Favour. And here it cannot be supposed, that any Thing thus sacrificed and given up can be profitable to God, or at all affect him who has the absolute, original Right to, and Property in, every Thing. Nor does the Value of the Sacrifice at all depend on the real, intrinsic Worth or Value of the Thing itself, but only on the Value of it, in the Opinion or Estimation of the Donor. And therefore when a Man parts with his darling Lusts and most beloved Vices, his Pride and Ambition, his ill-got Wealth and usurp'd Power; these are the highest and most meritorious Sacrifices of all, tho' here what is parted with, or sacrificed to the Lord, is worth nothing in itself, and could only tend to the Ruin and Destruction of the Possessor or Enjoyer.

Now, as God hath always declared himself well pleased with such Acts of Obedience and Resignation to his Will, and as they must be thus pleasing to him, in the Nature and Reason of the Thing itself, they were in their original and true Meaning very properly called reconciling, atoning, or propitiatory Sacrifices, Donations, or Resignations to the Lord. That God is placable, reconcileable, and propitious to Sinners, upon their Repentance or Reformation, and a strict Course of Obedience for the future, is a Truth founded in Nature, and confirm'd by the whole Course of Providence, to the Experience of all Mankind. To affirm the contrary, would be denying the Mercy and Goodness of God, as natural, essential Attributes and Perfections, and thereby leaving no rational Ground of Hope or Trust in him, from any Revelation whatever; since all Revelation must pre-suppose Reason, and be founded in it, and cannot make any Thing fit and reasonable, that was not so before. And as this Doctrine of Repentance and personal Obedience for the Time to come was the true, original Method of propitiating the offended Deity, and reconciling God to Man, founded in Nature, and confirmed by all the Declarations of Scripture; so it is the only Reparation or Satisfaction that a Sinner can make, or God accept.

Theoph.

Theoph. You must give me Leave here, to interrupt you a little before you go farther. For notwithstanding the Strength of your Expressions, I cannot see how the Notion you here advance, and so positively declare for, as founded both in Nature and Scriptures, can possibly consist with the Method of Reconciliation, Propitiation, and Atonement by the Death of Christ, as a Sacrifice for our Sins, which is plainly taught by *St. Paul*, and every where supposed and maintained in the *New Testament*. *Christ died for us, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God. He was made Sin for us, tho' he knew no Sin. He hath given himself as a Ransom for us. He hath purchased and redeemed us with his Blood, and it is by him, through the Blood of the Cross, that our Peace, Atonement, or Reconciliation is made with God.* These, and others of like Import, are very strong Expressions, and as I imagine, cannot easily be got over, under any Pretence of a figurative or metaphorical Way of speaking. It can signify but little in this Debate, between you and me, to say, as you often have done, that the Doctrine here supposed is absurd, irrational, and such as can have no Foundation in Nature. For the main Question between us, is, whether this be not a Scripture Doctrine, and a Doctrine taught by *St. Paul*; and if it is, you must either some Way or other reconcile the Doctrine to Reason, or

give up your great Apostle *Paul*, which yet you seem very loth to do. I must own, that I was not satisfy'd with what you offer'd about it in your foregoing Discourse. I think, you have yet touch'd it but very superficially, and the Matter is of such Consequence, as not to be pass'd over too slightly. I must confess, indeed, that I cannot as yet answer some of your Arguments, by which you have endeavour'd to prove this Doctrine of redundant Merit, or imputed Righteousness to be absurd and irrational; but yet, it still seems to me to be the Scripture Doctrine, and the Doctrine of St. *Paul* concerning Christ; and unless you can satisfy me to the contrary, you would sooner make me a Deist than a Christian in your Way.

Philal. I think, I see now where the Matter sticks with you; you suppose it to be a Scripture Doctrine, as maintained by St. *Paul*, that Christ died to reconcile God to Man, so as to dispose him to be merciful, or to make it fit and reasonable for him to pardon Sin upon Repentance, and a consequent holy Life; or which is the same Thing, that supposing the true Repentance and sincere Obedience of Sinners, yet this could not have been a reasonable or sufficient Ground of God's pardoning Mercy and Acceptance, without such a Sacrifice and prior Satisfaction made by the Blood of Christ. This, I know, is the common Supposition; and yet I may
venture

venture to declare, that there is not the least Ground or Foundation for it in *St. Paul's* Writings, or in any Part of the *New Testament*. It is every where declared, that Christ died to bring us to God by Repentance and new Obedience, to conquer our Enmity to God, and reconcile us to his holy Nature and Will. Christ therefore *died and rose again, that he might purify us to himself, a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*; that he might seal and confirm to us the Promise of a *better Inheritance*, take off our Hearts from the inordinate Love of the World and sensual Pleasures, and thereby qualify us for the pardoning Mercy and Acceptance of God, in the Practice of all *Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness*. But it is no where said, or so much as intimated, that Christ died to dispose or enable God to pardon Sin upon Repentance, or to make the Exercise of his Mercy fit and reasonable against the contrary Demands of his Justice. This, which is the common Topick of Pulpit Declamations, is all human Invention, and not Scripture, and might rather be call'd Raving than Reasoning.

Theoph. You are now, indeed, come to the Point, and have touch'd upon the true Ground of the Scruples and Difficulties I was under. And tho' you think you had clear'd up the Matter before, yet perhaps, I may detain you longer upon the Subject than you ex-

pected. If you have given a true Account of the Death of Christ, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for Sin, all our Protestant, Reforming Divines were grossly mistaken about it, and the Christian Protestant Clergy in general, ever since, have quite perverted the Scripture Doctrine of Christ's Death and Sufferings, and given us a perfect new Gospel.

Philal. I cannot help this if it be so; and therefore, I presume, that you do not intend it as an Objection to any Thing hitherto said. That our Protestant, Reforming Divines supposed Justification or Acceptance with God by the Death of Christ, as a Sacrifice for Sin, to be antecedent to, and independent of Sanctification, or Purity of Heart and Life, is very true. And therefore, while they depended on Justification and Acceptance with God, from the redundant Merits and imputed Righteousness of Christ alone, tho' they would not say, that personal Holiness was unnecessary, or that the Gospel did not require it; yet they spoke of it in very contemptible Terms, and considered Patience, Humility, Self-denial, Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness, and all the Christian Virtues excited and influenced by the Hope and Expectation of eternal Life and Happiness: They consider'd, I say, and represented all these as filthy Rags, menstruous polluted Garments, Drois and Dung, and such poor, dreggy, poisoned, contaminated Stuff as could
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not at all serve to reconcile God to us, or recommend us to his Favour. They who thought otherwise, were branded with the infamous Name of Legalists, and rejected as Strangers and Aliens to the Covenant of Grace, as Men who understood not the Privilege of Saints by Jesus Christ, and who deserv'd no Benefit by his Death and Sufferings. Now I should be glad to know, *Theophanes*, Whether this was not pleading the Merits of Christ against Gospel Obedience, and setting up a Scheme of *Justification* independent of Sanctification?

Theoph. I must own that I have always thought the *Calvinistical* Hypothesis of Justification to be attended with very great Difficulties, and that in its natural Consequences it must destroy and set aside the Necessity of Holiness or Gospel Obedience, as any Means or Condition, on our Part, of Happiness and divine Favour. For if Men may be fully and completely justify'd and accepted of God, by the redundant Merits and imputed Righteousness of Christ, antecedent to any free Actions, or Choice of their own, it seems very plain, that no personal Righteousness, or voluntary free Obedience, can be necessary to their Salvation; or which is the same Thing, to their Justification, Pardon and Acceptance with God. And yet I must look upon it in the *Calvinists* only, as a speculative Error, and ascribe it to a certain Dark-
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ness and Confusion in their Understandings. For to do them Justice, Multitudes of them act against their Principles, and are as conscientious, exact and careful in their Practices, as other People. And, indeed, none of them would presume to say, that Holiness, or Purity of Heart and Life, is not a necessary Qualification for Happiness, though they would not allow it to be any Means or Condition of it, as our own free Obedience and Choice.

Philal. Your Account of *Calvinism* is very just so far as it goes, and I believe with you, that these Men's Hearts have been often better than their Heads; and that their Errors have been more owing to the Confusion of their Understandings, than to any real Intention or Désign against Virtue and true Religion. But still the Principles themselves must be the same, and their natural Consequences the same, so far as Men really believe them, and act upon them. But to begin where you left off, and carry the *Calvinistical* Scheme a little farther; it is plain, that in this Hypothesis, Man is not a free Agent, but God treats him as a mere intelligent Machine, in an absolute, arbitrary Way, by mere Will and Pleasure, with regard both to Salvation and Damnation. Such as God intends or decrees to save, he first justifies them freely by Christ, and without any Act or Concurrence of their own, and then

then sanctifies them by necessary Grace, and the irresistible Operations of the Spirit. And those whom he resolves to damn, he hath left out of the List of Redemption, and determined to with-hold that necessary Grace, without which, they cannot so much as entertain a good Thought, or do a good Action. Now this Scheme, monstrous and absurd as it is, is yet all of a Piece, and the plain and necessary Consequence of Justification and Acceptance with God, not by personal Obedience, but by an arbitrarily imputed Righteousness of another. For it is certain, that whatever Christ undertook or performed for us, was previous to any Action, Choice, or Concurrence of our own. For it cannot be supposed that Christ did not finish the Work which he had undertaken, but left it to us to perfect and complete it.

But this wretched, insufferable Scheme of Superstition and false Religion, as it made Multitudes of Bigots and Enthusiasts at first, so it has brought forth the Atheists of this Age. For Atheism is the natural Production of Superstition and Enthusiasm, as one Extreme terminates in and begets another. An Atheist is only an Enthusiast between sleeping and waking, in which Sort of Delirium he seems enamour'd on Reason as his Mistress and Idol, while he is raving against God and Providence. The Enthusiast is commonly grave and severe, but the Atheist

ist gay and ludicrous; one groans and sighs, and the other laughs and sneers at Religion and Virtue. The Enthusiast in his sullen, dumb Fits is always premeditating Mischief, and waiting for an Opportunity to rush upon you unawares, or stab you in the Dark; but the Atheist gives fair Warning, and cries out I am unclean, unclean! Stand off or I shall destroy you. In short, these are only two different Species of Distraction: The Enthusiast is deeply and sullenly out of his Wits, and the Atheist is merrily and rantingly mad, and both are owing to the same general Cause, and may be reckoned the two opposite and distinct Sorts of religious Lunacy. And one of these Extremes Men must almost necessarily run into, when they bewilder themselves in the Clouds and Darknes of their own Imaginations, and seek for Religion any where, without the Boundaries of moral Truth and Righteousness.

Theoph. I as much dislike the *Calvinistical* Scheme as you; and I agree with you, that Superstition and false Religion often drive Men out of all Religions, as one Extreme is naturally productive of another. But then, as the Doctrine of Christ's dying and offering himself up to God, as a Sacrifice of Propitiation for the Sins of the World, is certainly a Scripture Doctrine, it must be some Way or other explained and understood agreeably to Truth and Reason; and

our modern *Arminian*, or moderate *Calvinistical* Divines have more rational, consistent Notions of this Matter. They allow the Necessity of Holiness, or Purity of Heart and Life, in order to our Justification and Acceptance with God, not only as a natural, subjective Qualification for Happiness and divine Favour, but as a necessary Condition to be performed by us, as moral free Agents. And this avoids all the Absurdities of the high *Calvinistical* or *Antinomian* Scheme, without derogating any Thing from the Honour of Christ, as to any Thing that the Scripture supposes him to have done for our Salvation and Acceptance with God.

Philal. I shall freely grant, that this new modern or moderate Scheme, as you call it, is infinitely preferable to the other, as not being clogg'd with any of its particular Absurdities. But then, I think, it would be still better, were it a little clearer and more intelligible: For I must frankly own to you, that I could never understand the Doctrine of Satisfaction, even as the *Arminians* and moderate *Calvinists* would explain it. If they mean any Thing, I think it must be this; that God hath accepted the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, as a satisfactory and valuable Consideration for his pardoning Sin upon Repentance; and that now, upon this Satisfaction given, he is at Liberty to exercise Mercy against all the contrary Claims
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of his Justice, which otherwise he could not have done consistent with his Wisdom and rectoral Justice. And that, when Sin was once committed, God could not, consistent with Justice, pardon it, how sincerely soever the Sinner might repent of and forsake it. And in this Way there was no Pardon or Remission of Punishment at all, for what was taken from us who had deserv'd it, was laid upon Christ, who had never deserv'd it, and while the Guilty was spared, the Innocent must be punished to satisfy Justice. And hereby Justice had its full Demands of Punishment, either in *Quantity* or *Value*, as much as if no Pardon or Remission had been ever granted at all. This is, doubtless, a most amazing and stupendous Projection beyond the Comprehension of Men or Angels! But this certainly was never the Contrivance of divine Wisdom and Goodness, but of human Ignorance and Superstition.

But to support this wild Conceit, our systematical Divines have forged a Covenant between the Father and Son, which they call the Covenant of Redemption. In which, as they pretend, it was stipulated and agreed, that the Death of Christ, as a vicarious Sacrifice for Sin, should be the Condition of God's pardoning Sin upon Repentance. But when they can produce any original Draught of this Covenant, or any Thing like it in Scripture, I may promise to be their Bond-Slave for-

ever. But the Truth is, that they patch'd up this Covenant among themselves without Consent of either of the Parties, and then they clapt together several independent Passages of Scripture, most grossly misunderstood and perverted, to make good their Authority for it. And from hence I doubt our systematical Divines, even the most moderate of them, will find it very difficult to prove their Doctrine of Satisfaction from Scriptures, or that it was not originally founded in gross Ignorance, Superstition, and human Invention.

Theoph. I thought I had understood the Doctrine of Satisfaction, as explain'd by our moderate Divines, very well; but if this Matter was clear before, you have certainly perplex'd it, and left me under some Doubt, whether I understand any Thing of it or not. But this is certain, and what I must still insist on, that Christ, according to the Scriptures, and in *St. Paul's* Account, died, as a Sacrifice of Propitiation for the Sins of the World. How this stands in your Sense, I think you have not yet sufficiently explained, and therefore, without interrupting you farther, I shall now hear you out upon it.

Philal. I think I have sufficiently proved, that there can be no Communication of personal Merit or Demerit from one individual to another, or that personal Rewards and Punish-

Punishments are necessarily and inseparably connected with personal Actions in all Reason and Equity. And one would imagine, that this must be so very clear to every Man's Understanding, as to need no Proof at all. I have likewise prov'd, that Sacrifices were always considered and look'd upon, as personal Actions in Obedience to the Will or Command of God. And that under the Law of *Moses* there was no such Thing as vicarious Sacrifices, no Transfer from one Person to another, nor any Commutation of Punishment by Sacrifice. If this was not so, you should have given some Instance of the contrary, which yet you have not thought fit to do; and consequently, thus far the Argument stands good. Now these legal Sacrifices were plainly considered as propitiatory, reconciling, and atoning, and the Priest, by sprinkling the sacrificial Blood, was to *make*, i. e. publickly and legally to DECLARE this Atonement, or by an authentick, authoritative Right to *notify* God's Acceptance of the Sacrifice, and his being well pleas'd with it, as a Thing agreeable to his Will. And surely if any Thing can please God, or reconcile him to a Sinner, or dispose him to exercise his Mercy, it must be such Acts of personal Obedience, as he hath specially commanded and declared himself honour'd by. And as the Priests, under the Law, publickly and authentickly declared

or notify'd by sprinkling the Blood, the Acceptableness of such Sacrifices or Services to God, so Christ by his Death, and shedding his own Blood, made a like publick Declaration or authentick Notification from God, of the propitiatory, reconciling Virtue or Acceptableness of such Obedience. Or, which is the same Thing, he prov'd and demonstrated by his own Example, that this Method of full and unreserv'd Obedience and absolute Resignation to the divine Will, was the one and only Method of pleasing God and obtaining his Favour, and that he would never be propitious or reconcileable to Men in any other Way. And to prove and exemplify this, Christ, who was not a Sinner, submitted to the Law in the most difficult Parts of Obedience, as if he had been a Sinner; and thereby, as it were, put himself in the Place of Sinners. But then the Suffering and Death of Christ are not to be considered as penal, or under the Notion of moral Punishment. This Supposition has been the Ground of a whole System of Superstition and false Divinity. It is certain, that Christ, in all his Sufferings, and in his Obedience unto Death, acted freely and voluntarily as a Servant and Subject of God, and under the Hope and Prospect of a vast and glorious Reward; and therefore he was no otherwise punish'd, than as every good Man is punish'd by denying
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himself and obeying God. And, I hope, it would not be said, that every Thing which a righteous Person may suffer and undergo for the Sake of God, and a good Conscience, and for the Benefit of Mankind, is a Punishment inflicted upon him, when he does this in Obedience to God, and in Prospect of a Reward that is infinitely superior to, and more than an Equivalent for all his Sufferings. But surely, so far as Christ was punished, every Man is punished for Virtue, Integrity, and true Goodness; since in this Case, every righteous Person must expect Sufferings, hard Treatment, and unjust Dealings from wicked, ungodly Men. It is astonishing, methinks, that our systematical Divines should not see this, and that they should be so much puzzled and perplexed where there is really no Difficulty.

But farther, it is certain, that the Action of the Priests in sprinkling the sacrificial Blood under the Law, was not that Obedience, which really made the Atonement, and disposed God to be merciful to, and accept the Sacrificers. This was, surely, the voluntary, free Obedience and Offering of the Proprietors and Donors themselves; the Acceptableness of which to God, and his being thereupon propitious to them, was thus signify'd and notify'd, by the Action of the Priest in that legal, authoriz'd Ritual of sprinkling the Blood. And analogous

logous hereto, when *St. Paul* so often compares, in a figurative Way, the Death of Christ, and his shedding or sprinkling of his Blood upon the Cross, to the Action of the Priests under the Law, he doth not and cannot suppose, from the Nature and Force of the Comparison, that Christ's Death and sprinkling his own Blood upon the Cross, was that very individual, personal Obedience, by which God must be reconciled, propitiated, or made favourable to us; but only the Means of it, and an authentick Declaration from God, in what Way he would accept and reward us, even in the same Way in which Christ himself was accepted and rewarded, by a full Conformity and Resignation to the divine Will. This is the Way in which we must obtain the divine Favour, and render God merciful and propitious to us, by universal, unreserv'd Obedience in Conformity to Christ, as the great Pattern, Exemplar, Motive, and Means of it. Christ, therefore, suffered and died on the Cross, that he might fulfil all Righteousness, exemplify the most perfect Obedience, obtain the Kingdom and Glory proposed to him, and thereby put himself at the Head of a new Dispensation, under which Men should be justify'd and accepted, or render God propitious to them in the same Way of Purity and Sincerity, and be excited and enabled

by the most powerful Motives and effectual Aids to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lufts, and to lead a sober, righteous and godly Life, in Conformity to Christ, their great Pattern and Exemplar.

To this End it was that Christ died and rose again; for this he offered up his Life and Soul upon the Cross, that he might obtain Power from on high, to bring us to the same Spirit, Disposition, and Temper, and to set up a Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness in the World. And this I take to be the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation, Redemption, and Deliverance from Sin and Satan by Jesus Christ.

Theoph. I have given you a great deal of Trouble, *Philaethes*, upon this Argument, which I hope you will excuse; since I must own, that I have receiv'd more Light and Information, than I could have expected, and that you have almost remov'd all my Doubts and Difficulties about it. But lest I should mistake you, you will give me Leave to make a short Recapitulation of what you have said, so far as I understand it. You allow then, the Sufferings and Death of Christ, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for Sin, tho' not as the *meritorious Cause*, but as the *moral, effective Means* of our Salvation and Recovery: Not as justifying us in itself, but as directing us to, and putting us into the Way and Method of our Justification
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and Acceptance with God. And thus we may properly say, that we are justify'd and saved, by, or through Jesus Christ, who by his Righteousness and Obedience unto Death, hath obtained Favour of God, to set up a Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness in the World, as the most rational and effectual Method of bringing Men to that personal Faith, Repentance, and sincere Obedience, which was absolutely necessary to reconcile God to them, to propitiate the Deity, and regain the divine Favour. And, in this Respect, Christ, by a natural and easy Metaphor and Figure of speaking, may be call'd our *Propitiator*, our *Reconciler*, *the Captain of our Salvation*, and *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*. And this, indeed, seems to me at present to answer all Difficulties, and to account for the Scripture Phraseology, without any strained and forced Interpretation or unnatural Construction. If I understand you right in this Matter, *Philalethes*, I am highly pleas'd; but if not, you will correct me.

Philal. You take me perfectly right, *Theophanes*, and I am proud of such a Profelyte, in a Point so necessary and fundamental to all true Religion. But it is really astonishing, how Mankind should run into such gross Absurdities, and irrational, inconsistent Schemes concerning Sacrifices, Propitiation, and the Method of Reconciliation with God.

Theoph. It is really so. I must own that I have been often exceedingly perplex'd about it in my private, free Enquiries, tho' I have laboured as much as possible to be orthodox. And since you have already given me some farther Light, I hope you will now go on with your Account of Sacrifices, Propitiations, Atonements, &c. where I had interrupted you.

Philal. This I shall do with Pleasure, and with the greater Chearfulness, as you seem now to be in a proper Temper for the Exercise of Patience.

The original, true Religion, therefore, of God and Nature, consisted in the direct, immediate Worship of the one true God, by an absolute Resignation to, and Dependence on him in the Practice of all the Duties and Obligations of moral Truth and Righteousness. During this State of true Religion, Men look'd to and depended upon God, as the sole Author of Nature, of all the Properties and Powers of subordinate Beings and Agents, and as the one only original, efficient Cause of all Things. They considered themselves, indeed, as *free Agents*, or as acting without any Force or Compulsion. But then they did not imagine that God had given them any Powers and Faculties independent of himself, and much less, that he had made a material World capable of subsisting and

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governing itself by its independent Powers and Properties, at first communicated, without the continued Power, Agency and Efficiency of the first Cause and Author of Nature. Men, in this State of Innocency and true Religion, own'd God, not only as the Author, Contriver and Former of Nature, but as the Preserver, Supporter and Director of all Nature, by his continued Agency and providential Causality. They considered all Events *good* and *evil*, as the Ordination and Appointment of God; the *one*, as the natural and just Reward of Wisdom and Integrity, and the *other*, as either the necessary Exercise and Trial of *Virtue*, or as the Punishment and Cure of *Folly* or *Sin*. This, as I take it, was the original State of Philosophy and true Religion, before the Apostasy of Angels and Men. But the Defection first began among the Angels, before Man had any Being. These exalted and first Species of intelligent Beings were created with different Powers and Capacities, and God had placed them in different Ranks and Orders in his providential Government, for the Good of the Whole. But he still retain'd the sole undivided Sovereignty, and order'd all Addresses to be made immediately to himself, since he had not appointed this Order to save himself the Trouble of Government, or to substitute any other Sovereign in his

Stead. This Law was observed for some Time, and the Order kept: But it was not long before the inferior and less intelligent Angels gave their *Chiefs* an Opportunity to rebel, and set up for themselves, in Opposition to their Sovereign. The inferior Ranks of Angels imagined, that such high Dignities and Honours above them, must argue not only superior Wisdom and Abilities, but peculiar Favour. And therefore, they left off addressing God immediately, which they fancied would be too presumptuous; but every one thought himself secure of his Point, if he could but make an Interest with Lucifer or Satan, who were then reckoned the prime Ministers. Upon which, having formed a very strong Party, these Arch-Angels took such State, and assumed such Authority to themselves, that they would not admit of any Addressees to the King of Kings, but what should pass through their Hands, as prime Ministers and Favourites. But this Arrogance could not pass long unpunished in Heaven, tho' the Plot was so deeply laid, and the Conspiracy carry'd so far, that it occasioned a War, in which Lucifer, Satan, and all their Adherents were totally routed, and after an intire Overthrow banish'd for ever from the Kingdom of Heaven, and doom'd to live as Exiles upon this wretched Earth, till farther Judgment should be given. And hereupon it was enacted, as an eternal, immutable Law of
 God

God and Nature, that no Petition should ever be heard or accepted for the future, but what should come immediately from the Petitioner himself. The fallen, ejected Angels being thus conquered and cast down, soon began to play the same Game here, and quickly drew Mankind into the same rebellious, destructive Scheme. Man, in the Infancy and Innocency of human Nature, had hitherto kept his Integrity, and worshipped none but God: He had known no other Sovereign, and submitted to no other Authority. But these apostate Angels coming into the World, made Men believe that they were Gods, and that they could establish an Aristocratical Government upon Earth, much better than the Monarchy of Heaven. They made Man believe, that God did not require such an absolute Submission, or at least, that he had no Right to it, and that their Project of a mix'd, moderated Government was much better. The Argument, it seems, was plausible; but as soon as the Experiment was made, every Thing began to grow worse and worse: For these apostate, fallen Angels did not open their whole Design, and carry their Point at once; but they did it gradually. At first they persuaded Men, that they, as Ministers of Providence, had very great Power, and that God committed the Government of the World, and the Interests of Mankind into their Hands. And here, at first, they insisted

insisted upon no more, than that Men should always own their Authority, and mention their Names in their Addresses to God, and pray that he would hear, and answer, and favour them, by the Means, Instrumentality, and Agency of these prime Favourites and Ministers of his Providence. But this Point being thus easily gain'd, these Dæmons soon carry'd it a little farther, and prevail'd with Men to pray directly to them, as Intercessors and Mediators with God for them. And this seem'd but a very natural Concession after the former, and was soon yielded. Men now began to see the Arrogance and Presumption of addressing God immediately, and therefore thankfully submitted themselves to the Assistance and good Offices of these mediatorial Gods. But these apostate Angels, or Dæmons, could not stop here; for having gone thus far, they soon persuaded their Worshippers, that God had made them absolute and independent in their several Districts, or within their own peculiar Provinces; and consequently, that there could be no Need to address any but themselves for the Blessings and Benefits which they were authoriz'd to bestow. And this Point being once gain'd, the true God was quite excluded with respect to any religious Worship or Obedience, and all his Honour and Glory given to others: At first, to the fallen Angels, who pretended to come from the Sun,
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Moon, and Stars, and to be the resident Gods, and providential Dispensers of Good or Evil to the World, from these heavenly Bodies. But Mankind being thus revolted from Reason, and apostatiz'd from the Knowledge and Worship of the true God, could not stop here; for after they had terminated their ultimate, religious Worship and Obedience on these primary, angelical or celestial Mediators, they thought it necessary to make a subordinate Interest and Friendship in addressing them. And from hence they contriv'd and constituted a vast Number of other inferior Mediators and Intercessors, who might have a nearer and more immediate Concern for them, and who might present their Prayers and Petitions with greater Acceptableness and Hopes of Success to the original, primary Mediators, or planetary celestial Gods. And thus they canoniz'd their own Heroes and great Men after their Death, and sent them to the planetary Orbs or heavenly Mansions, where they believ'd they were to reside as chief Favourites and prime Ministers of the first Mediators. And by this Means they have always a Friend at Court, or their Sub-ministers in waiting at every celestial Mansion. To these Sub-mediators as managing the Affairs and Interests of their respective Families and Countries, they gave the Names of the Sun, Moon and Planets, or the Names of the original Mansions
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of the primary, angelical, or celestial Gods. But because these celestial Mansions, and consequently the Gods themselves, were sometimes out of Sight, and hid from the Eyes of Mortals, by the Interposition of the Earth, by which Means their Adorers and Invokers could not directly gaze on them, or worship them in View; therefore they erected Temples to them, and contrived Images to be inspired with the Virtues, benign Influency, and special Presence of the Gods to whom they were devoted, and before which they might present their Petitions at any Time, with Success and Approbation. And hence *Terah*, the Father of *Abraham*, is said by all the Eastern Writers quoted by *Dr. Hyde*, to have been the chief God-founder or Artificer in this Way, that had ever been known in *Chaldea*, and to have raised to himself and Family a vast Estate, by inspiring these Statues and Images with the Virtues and Influences of the planetary, mediatorial Gods. And in Process of Time, such was the gross Stupidity of the Vulgar, these primary and secondary Gods were all laid aside, and the real Veneration and Worship was paid to the Maker itself, or to the Statues and Images of Brass, Iron, Wood and Stone. But how such a Perversion of all Religion, and of human Nature itself, should ever take Place, and prevail among Mankind, you might perhaps wonder; and, therefore, I may inform

you, that all this came about by the Power of *Priestcraft* working upon Ignorance and *guilty Fear*. And here I must again resume the Subject of Sacrifices, where you had occasionally broke it off.

A Sacrifice, therefore, in its original and proper Import, as I had observ'd to you, signifies any Act of Obedience, where something dear and valuable to the Person, was given up and parted with, in Submission and Resignation to the Will of God. And such Acts of Obedience as are most acceptable to God, were considered as reconciling and propitiatory, and the most effectual Means of obtaining or regaining the divine Favour, where God had been provoked and displeas'd. And because Bounty, Liberality and Munificence were supposed as the highest Expressions of Love to God and Man, therefore publick Feasts and splendid Entertainments by Patriarchs, Princes, and great Men, as the surest Marks and Expressions of Bounty and Liberality, soon obtain'd the Name of Sacrifices in an eminent Sense, and as distinguish'd from other Acts of Charity and Munificence. And as these Festivals were intended as publick Expressions and Declarations of Joy and Thankfulness for Blessings receiv'd, as a Means of strengthening and cementing mutual Friendship and Alliances; and as highly pleasing and acceptable to God at the same Time; they were from hence properly enough call'd, and esteem'd

teemed as eucharistical, foederal, and propitiatory; tho' sometimes one might be principally in View, and sometimes the other.

At first, the prime Patriarch, or Founder of the Feast, managed it and directed it in Person, and was the chief Steward, as well as the Founder. But this soon grew troublesome, and was thought below the Dignity of Princes and great Men; and, therefore, they appoint Stewards or chief Officers under them, to inspect and preside over the whole Affair: These Officers were to proclaim the Sacrifice or Feast, to welcome the Guests, to direct and look over the Butlers, Bakers, Butchers, and Cooks, to declare the Occasion of the Festival, and recommend all to the divine Blessing and Acceptance. And these chief Stewards, or Masters of the Feast, were called *Priests*, and were at first paid out of the publick Treasury, like all other State-Officers, at the King's Pleasure. But being once put into such an Office, they soon made themselves necessary, confin'd almost all Religion to such Sacrifices or Festivals, and placed the whole Merit of them to the Discharge of their Function. And thus from being Masters of the Ceremony, and Supervisors of the Feast, or the chief Butlers, Bakers, Butchers, and Cooks, they mounted themselves, by Degrees, into the Throne of God, and made both Princes and People depend on them for all the Blessings they could expect from Heaven. The

The first Instance we have now extant of any such independent Priesthood, is that which *Joseph* settled and established in *Egypt*. When he went down thither the Priesthood was absolutely dependent on the Crown, and the High Priest or chief Pontiff had his daily Allowance, *durante beneplacito*, from the King. After this great Man was made prime Minister, and placed at the Head of Affairs in *Egypt*, he managed Matters so well, that in the Course of fourteen Years he had absolutely enslav'd the whole Nation, and ruin'd the richest and most flourishing Kingdom then in the World. He obliged the *Egyptians* first to bring in all their Money, Goods and Chattels, then to sell their Lands of Inheritance, and last of all themselves, as perpetual Vassals to the Crown: And all this just to keep themselves alive under great Struggles and Difficulties for seven Years. Some say, he contrived this not only to aggrandize himself, but to make his own Family and People absolute Masters of so rich and fertile a Country: But I shall not dispute that Matter now. All that I am concern'd to prove is, that he made the Priesthood in *Egypt* independent, which was not so before, and that for exempting the whole priestly Order from this common Slavery, he had at least this private Interest, that he had, as the Story assures us, married the High Priest's Daughter.

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In the fourth Year of the Famine, or the Year after the Descent of the *Hebrew* Shepherds, the *Egyptians* having brought in all their Money, Cattle, and personal Property, and the Calamity still growing upon them, came and propos'd to surrender their Lands of Inheritance, and to sell themselves, as perpetual Vassals to the Crown: This Proposition was readily accepted by the Minister, and the Bargain struck with the People: But here the Priests did not surrender their Lands to the Crown, because they had an ordinary or annual Pension from the King, and were under no Necessity of selling their Inheritance, or abating of their Expences, under this publick Calamity. And this was, doubtless, a very great Favour, and shews, that the prime Minister had adopted the Priesthood as his own Family. See *Gen.* xlvii. 22. But afterwards, the publick Distress and Calamity still increasing, the Minister obtained a Grant from the King in Perpetuity for the Priests Lands, so as to render them unalienable or irrefumable by the Crown: For after this, there is another Reason given for the Priests not selling their Lands, because the King could not resume them, they *were not Pharaoh's*, or alienable to the Crown, like all other real and personal Property, *ver.* 26. This Story is plainly and simply told, and since it redounds not much to the Credit of the Minister and the Historian, was certainly
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in *Joseph's* Interest, there can be no Reason to doubt of the Truth of it.

Thus the Priesthood was made hereditary, and a Hierarchy was establish'd in *Egypt*, independent of the Crown. And the Priests having gain'd this grand Point, and being the Masters of the Ceremony at all publick Feasts and Solemnities before, by the King's Designation, they soon made themselves Masters, not only of the People; but of the King himself, with whom they had shared the whole Property of the Nation. And being now exempted from all Offices and Employments Civil or Military, and made independent of the Crown, they set themselves diligently to the Study of occult Philosophy, or natural Magick, in which they made great Improvements, which they kept as deep Secrecy to themselves. And hereby they made the People believe, that they had an immediate Intercourse and Communication with the Gods, that they could converse freely and at Pleasure with the Angels and planetary Dæmons, and were let into their secret Designs towards Mortals. This soon made their Order esteemed as sacred, and procured them the Veneration and blind Submission of the astonish'd, stupify'd Vulgar.

From this Time *Egypt* became the Mother of Superstition, the Parent and Patroness of new Gods, and the Mistress of Idolatry throughout the World. Every new God was

a new Revenue to the Priests, and all Nations received their Gods from *Egypt*; for this, after the Establishment of the Hierarchy, or independent Priesthood, was a Land of Miracles and Prodigies continually wrought by these holy Magicians; which had such an Effect upon the *Israelites*, in the Course of two hundred and ten Years, while they remained in *Egypt*, that nothing could influence them but Miracles; they could not believe in, or trust God in the ordinary Course of Providence, and would never have regarded *Mosès* if he could not have out-done the *Egyptian* Sorcerers.

I have given this short Account of the Hierarchy in *Egypt*, to shew how necessarily civil and spiritual Slavery are connected, and how naturally productive they are of one another. The Priests in *Egypt* could never have secured to themselves such a Dominion over Conscience, if they had not, by an Incidence of Providence, first gain'd an Independency both of the Crown and the People. Nor could the People have thus tamely resign'd their Property and civil Rights, had they not in great Measure given up their Understandings before. For no standing Forces in *Egypt* could have guarded the Magazines and Store-houses of Corn, while the Populace were starving and resigning their All, had not the Priests gain'd too great an Ascendant over their

their Understandings and Consciences, before Things came to this Extremity. But the Priests in *Egypt*, upon the Occasion as already related, having gain'd this Point of the enslav'd, miserable People, to make them believe, that the Virtue of their Sacrifices, and the Acceptableness of all their Services, must depend upon them, hereby gave the last mortal Wound and Stab to all true Religion. And all other Nations, who receiv'd this Notion from them, lost the original and only true Doctrine of Propitiation and Atonement, or of the Means of reconciling Sinners to God, and regaining his Favour: And from henceforward Men placed their Hopes of Acceptance with God upon the authoritative Declarations or Notifications of the Priests, who knew nothing of the Heart, and who could not judge of the Sincerity or Insincerity of the Sacrificers: And thus the external, authoritative Action of the Priest came to stand for the inward Sincerity of the Person; and in Consequence of this, the Notion of Propitiation and Atonement came to be transferred from a *personal* to a vicarious Acceptableness and Obedience, or to the Priests as the prime Favourites of Heaven, and the only authoriz'd Mediators between the People and God: And hence the Priests had now the sole Power of opening and shutting the Gates of Heaven to whom they pleased, *i. e.* to such as should please or displease them. How

far the *Jews* gave into this Notion, and how far the Christian Priests have since indulged the People in it, may be considered afterward. But, surely, they who have understood *St. Paul* in this Sense, and who would transfer the *Egyptian* and *Jewish* Doctrine of Atonement and Propitiation to the Priesthood of Christ, have greatly mistaken the Christian Doctrines, and grossly imposed on the Christian World.

Theoph. I think no Christian Divine would pretend to make the Death of Christ, as a Sacrifice or Propitiation for Sin, available to any but true Penitents, or such as sincerely believe and obey the Gospel. And therefore, pray how do they injure or weaken the Cause of personal Righteousness, or make this the less necessary? or how does the Notion of a vicarious Sacrifice or Propitiation tend to encourage Sin?

Philal. Indeed, if Men made this vicarious Obedience signify nothing, it could do no Hurt: But whatever is ascrib'd to this must be taken off from the Obligation and Necessity of personal Obedience, so far as it is considered as vicarious and imputable.

Theoph. I think not. But it is rather a farther Encouragement and Security, to the Acceptableness of personal Obedience. But, if you mean that the Death of Christ was a vicarious Sacrifice for Sin, or a vicarious Obedience, so as to exempt us from the Necessity

of personal Obedience, you argue against Nobody, for Nobody asserts any such Thing.

Philal. I hope you remember, that we are now talking of vicarious Obedience, or of Christ's obeying and suffering in our Place and Stead. And yet this is what you seem to affirm and deny at the same Time. For if personal Obedience be still equally necessary, and if Repentance and new Obedience must be always, and upon every Supposition equally acceptable to, and available with God, pray where is the Use, Reason, or Necessity of vicarious Obedience? I hope, you will not say, contrary to all the Declarations of God, and to all the Notifications of his Will both in Nature and Scripture, that he could not pardon Sin, and accept the penitent, returning Sinner, without a prior Satisfaction made; since this must deprive him of his natural, essential Goodness and Mercy, and lay the whole Obligation somewhere else. This would throw you upon the same Absurdities that had been urged before, and to which you had given no Answer. But if we should talk at this Rate, we must resume and run over the whole Argument again. What Efficacy or Tendency the Obedience of Christ had to bring us to Repentance and the Love of God, and to devote our whole Hearts and Souls to his Service, which is the only true acceptable Sacrifice, hath been considered already. That Christ's Obedience

and Death was the most effectual, moral Means of obtaining this, is granted. But his Death, as the meritorious Cause of the Acceptableness of Repentance, the Love of God, and a sincere Dedication of ourselves to his Service, is a very strange, irrational and unscriptural Notion to me.

Theoph. I see we must always come to the same Point again, and it would be to little Purpose to dispute it farther. And, therefore, you may now go on as you intended, with your Account of the *Jewish* State and OEconomy, under the *Mosaick* Law. This is a Matter of Consequence, and ought to be farther considered.

Philal. But it will be necessary, *Theophanes*, in the first Place, to break off this Conference for to Night. It grows late, and we may better resume the Discourse in the Morning. And here, I see, comes *Rabbi Ben-Aaron*: I know you have some Acquaintance with him, and he always calls upon me when he travels this Way. He is a Man of Learning and good Sense, and no great Bigot to his Religion: We shall spend the Evening with him, and I doubt not but it will be to our mutual Satisfaction.

Theoph. I gave a silent Attention, *Philalthes*, all this last Evening to your Discourse with the *Rabbi*. I must own, that I was highly pleased with what pass'd between you, and think, I never heard an Argument between

tween two such Antagonists managed with more Decency, Temper and Candour. But as this was a private Conversation, and you had not Leave to publish it, you and I must proceed with our Subject just as if no such Thing had interven'd. And, therefore, you will now go on with an Account of the People of *Israel* under the *Mosaick* OEconomy.

Philal. I had observ'd to you, that this People, during their long stay in *Egypt*, for six or seven successive Generations, had been perfectly *Egyptianiz'd*. They had been wrought into all the Manners, Customs and Usages, and especially into the false Religion and grossest Superstitions of that enslav'd and ruin'd Nation. As they had seen nothing for two hundred Years together, but Miracles and Prodigies wrought by those priestly Magicians, they could conceive of no other Way of receiving Information and Instruction from God. And from hence, when *Moses* undertook their Deliverance they might have been more properly called *Egyptians* than *Israelites*, since they were *Egyptians* in every Respect, but their Origin and Descent, which can make no Difference in human Nature. And it is certain, that from this Time, neither *Moses*, nor any of their other Prophets, could ever deliver them from this *Egyptian* Darkness, Blindness of Mind, and Slavery of Conscience, to priestly Power and Absolution.

For, having lost all inward Sincerity, and Integrity of Heart, and all true Notions of God, Religion and Providence, they had nothing to depend on but Miracles, immediate Revelations, and absolute, uncovenanted Promises, and no Salvation to expect but for the Sake of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*. This was the Faith and Hope of *Israel*, and the imputed Righteousness from which they look'd for the Salvation of the Lord. Nor could any Dispensation of Providence towards them ever cure them of this constitutional, natural Blindness, which they had contracted in *Egypt* among their Fellow Slaves, and under which they still remain abandoned and forsaken of God to this Day.

Now this Blindness, Bigotry and Enthusiasm being the incurable Distemper of that wretched People, what could *Moses* and the Prophets do with them? Or how was it possible to govern and influence them but in their own Way? God, therefore, suffer'd this for the Hardness of their Hearts, and gave them up to that Wickedness and Tyranny under such a Dispensation of Blindness and Slavery, because there was no other Way to be taken with them, unless he would have wrought the greatest Miracle of all by converting them irresistibly, and changing their Hearts, without any rational Means or Endeavours of their own.

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From hence *Moses* and the Prophets found it necessary to submit to, and comply in great Measure with this incurable *Egyptian* Temper of the People; but not without frequent Admonitions and Warnings, that their gross Superstition, and Dependence on such priestly Authority and Absolutions, would some Time or other prove their Destruction.

Theoph. But how will you bring off *Moses* and the Prophets from having a great Hand in encouraging and supporting such priestly Impositions? Nay, is not God himself every where represented as instituting this Priesthood, and even as confirming it by Miracles?

Philal. You know how strenuously *St. Paul* argues against the literal Sense of this Law, and how often he declares against it, thus understood, as *carnal*, *worldly* and deadly. But this brings me to a Distinction that I hope may serve to clear up the whole Matter: And that is, that *Moses* and the Prophets being under such a Necessity, from the Blindness and Obduracy of the People, always writ with a double Intention, or ambiguous Construction. They had a popular, political Sense, which as the most literal and obvious, was most suited to the gross Apprehensions, Prejudices, and Superstitions of the Vulgar: And, at the same Time, another Meaning or Construction, which was the true and rational one, but to be supposed and understood only

only by the wiser Sort. The Case was this, that the most antient, narrative Authors, whether sacred or prophane, did not write as mere Historians, but as Orators, Poets and Dramatists. In which Way of Writing they kept up to strict, historical Truth, as to the fundamental, leading Facts or principal Events. But with regard to the Manner and Circumstances of Action, the Orator and Poet often took the Liberty to embellish and recommend the History with such sensible Images and dramattick Representations, as being most agreeable to the popular Taste and vulgar Notions, might the more effectually move and direct the Affections and Passions of the People, as the great Engines and Springs of Government. The Populace or Bulk of Mankind in all Ages have been strongly moved and influenced, by the Accounts and Stories of Angels, Dæmons, Ghosts, Witches, Magicians, Dreams, Visions, and other such like supernatural Operations. And this hath been generally the Method of proving Things, with those who know but little, and mind less of Nature and Reason. And it is certain, that the greatest and most learned Men in all Ages and Countries, have accommodated themselves in great Measure to this popular Taste, as finding it much easier to govern the common People in their own Way, and upon their own Principles, than to bring them out of it, or to hit
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upon any other Method that would have the same Effect. *Homer's* Account of the *Trojan* War, and of the Conquest of the Country by the *Greeks*, is historically true as to the principal Facts and Persons concern'd on both Sides. But his Manner and Circumstances of Action, his miraculous Imagery and poetick Ornaments are all his own, like our *Milton* and *Shakespear*.

These poetick Beauties, and dramattick Representations of Things, can occasion no Difficulty to those who enter into the Spirit and Design of the Author, and who can distinguish the Orator or Poet from the Historian. But vulgar Heads must make strange Work with such Performances, who without entering into the Spirit and Design should understand every Thing according to the Letter. And this was the Case of the *Jewish* Nation with regard to the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, and *St. Paul* has evidently and irrefutably prov'd it.

The History of the *Exodus*, and Conquest of *Canaan*, relates to Things done about six hundred Years before *Homer's* Time, and is written much in the same oratorical and dramattick Way. For should we take this Drama in the obvious literal Sense, we must suppose *Moses* to have been a more fabulous, romantick Writer, than *Homer*, *Æsop*, *Ovid*, or any of the Heathen Poets and Mythologists. We must suppose, that
God

God in those Days, appear'd, spoke, and acted like Man, or as a finite circumscrib'd Being, in a visible, sensible Manner; that he conversed intimately and familiarly with *Moses*, as a Man talketh with his Friend; that he went out of *Egypt* at the Head of the *Israelite* Army, and walk'd with them thro' the *Red Sea*; that he travelled up and down with them forty Years in the Wilderness, always at the Beck or Call of *Moses*, to consult and talk with him upon every Occasion; that God, in a visible, sensible Manner, as personally present, always gave *Moses* the Word of Command, when they should march, and when they should rest, and mark'd out every Foot of Ground from Time to Time for the Encampments of their respective Tribes. In short, God himself, as visibly and personally present, acted as the General, and *Moses* had nothing to do but to follow Orders and obey the Word of Command, which a Fool might have done as well as a wise Man. Nay, in the literal Sense of the Story, such was the Interest of *Moses* with God, that he could make him do whatever he pleas'd; he often changed his Mind, when he had resolv'd to destroy the People; and prevail'd with him to go farther, when he had determin'd to leave them, and go no farther: And this, lest the *Egyptians* should mock the God of *Israel*, and say, that he was not able to conduct

duct them through the Wilderness, and give them the Possession of the Land which he had promised them, and for which he had engaged his Honour and Veracity for above four hundred Years before to do it at this very Time. This was the main topical Argument, which *Moses* is said to have used with God, and by which he gain'd his Ends in every Thing, but the main Point, which was the Conquest of the Country, which these *Israelites* were never able to do, till *David's* Time, about four hundred Years after the Promise to *Abraham* was expired. It is true, they conquered and took Possession of a small Part of the Country upon the Mountains; but they could not drive the Inhabitants out of the *Plains*, because *they had Chariots of Iron*, or because God never enabled them as Infantry to stand before the *Canaanite* Horse. For otherwise, what were these Chariots of Iron to the Lord, any more than the Walls of *Jericho*, which fell down with a Blast of Rams Horns, without the *Israelites* striking one Blow, tho' they put all the Inhabitants to the Sword? And from this Circumstance, was it not for the Miracle, one might be apt to imagine, that the City was betray'd into their Hands, and the Gates opened to them, by *Rahab* and her Family, whom they saved.

Theoph. You represent this whole Affair, as a very strange Story, and yet it seems
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to be the Truth of the Matter. But must not *Mofes* then, or at least the after Historians, in giving such an Account of Things, have been very great Impostors?

Philal. Perhaps not, unless you will say, that every Poet and Dramatist is an Impostor, or that the most simple literal Truth is always necessary, that all Fable or Allegory is unlawful, or that People ought not to be governed and kept in Subjection by any such popular Aids and Compliances to their Humours, Prejudices and prevailing Bias, when they are incapable of being governed in any other Way. I had observ'd before, that this grossly stupid, superstitious and *Egyptianiz'd* People came out of their Bondage, with all the Prejudices and wrong Impressions, that they had contracted in that most wretched, enslav'd and Priest-ridden Country. They had seen nothing in *Egypt* for two hundred Years, but a continued Series of Prodigies and Miracles wrought by these cunning Priests or Magicians. And, therefore, from hence forwards, they regarded no Conduct of common Providence towards them, and despised human Prudence, and the Use of natural Means; and while they continued throughout all their Generations, under the same *Egyptian* Darknes and mental Vassalage, they still expected a miraculous Deliverance by the immediate Power of God, though they had no real Goodness in themselves,

themselves, nor any Thing to plead for such peculiar divine Favour, but the Obligations which they fancy'd God had laid himself under in his Covenant with *Abraham*, *Iaac* and *Jacob*.

But as this Nation was set up by Providence, as an Example to the World in all future Ages, of the natural Effects and Consequences of Ignorance, Superstition, Presumption, and Immorality; it may not be amiss here, to give a short Account of the false Principles and fatal Errors, which prov'd the Occasion of all this, and which issued in the final, total Destruction of their Government and political Constitution.

As the People of *Israel* had been naturaliz'd, and wrought into the Spirit, Genius and Temper of the *Egyptians*, so they still retain'd the gross Ignorance, strong Prejudices, and constitutional Character of that priestly-enflav'd Nation. Under this State of Blindness, Obstinacy, and moral Wick- edness, *Moses* brought them out of *Egypt*, and in the same Condition God left them at last, when he gave them up as an everlasting Name of Reproach, and eternal Scandal to the Profession of Religion, without moral Goodness, or any rational Dependence on God and Providence. Now the false Principles and gross Errors which occasioned all this, and in which the *Egyptian* Priests and Sorcerers had confirm'd them, were such as these: ;ft,

ist, They had lost all true Notions of God, of his natural and moral Attributes and Perfections, and of his providential Government of the World. They could believe nothing as necessarily and eternally true in Nature and Reason; but depended for the Proof of every Thing upon Miracles, Prodigies, Dreams, Visions, Voices from Heaven, and such like Manifestations of the immediate Power, personal, sensible Presence, and finite, circumscriptive Agency of God. Nothing could affect them but what was of such a Nature, at least in Appearance, and no other Sort of Story would take with them. But as this could be no Criterion of Truth or Falshood, Right or Wrong in Morality, so they had really no such Thing left among them. They receiv'd the moral Laws, Statutes and Judgments from *Moses*, not as eternally true and right in Nature, but as the positive Will of God. And from hence they were equally dispos'd to receive any Thing else in direct Opposition to it, upon any Appearance of Miracles, Revelations, or extraordinary Events. Upon this Foot they could not distinguish between the effective and permissive Will of God; but ascrib'd every Thing equally to God, as ordering, directing and appointing the greatest moral, as well as natural Evil, and though brought about by the Power and Malice of Tyrants and wicked Men.

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Of this I might give many flagrant Instances through the whole Course of the History; but to any Man tolerably acquainted with the Story, there can be no Need of it.

2dly, This stupid, *stiff-necked* People, or *Generation of Vipers*, having been delivered out of *Egypt*, by an extraordinary Providence under the Conduct of *Moses*, and brought off with their Lives and Fortunes and all their Plunder, after they had been the most grievous and insupportable Plagues of an enslav'd and ruin'd Country for above two hundred Years; from hence took it into their Heads, that they were the peculiar People of God, and special Favourites of Heaven, by an absolute, irreverfible Decree; that they should, from henceforth, succeed in all their Enterprizes, make themselves Masters of the whole World, and that God would give *Israel* the *Heathen* for his *Inheritance*, and the *uttermoſt Parts of the Earth* for his *Poſſeſſion*, in Deſpite of all the Efforts of any Nation upon Earth to ſubdue and conquer them. That this was a ſtrong and moſt invincible Prejudice and national Impreſſion from firſt to laſt, is evident beyond all Diſpute, from the whole Story: But how much they were miſtaken, Time hath ſufficiently demonſtrated, and we are under very little Doubt now about the

absolute Decrees of God in Favour of *Israel*.
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3dly, This national Delusion was originally founded upon a gross Mistake of the Nature and Design of the *Abrahamick* Covenant, or God's Promise to *Abraham* of the Land of *Canaan*, as an everlasting Inheritance after the Expiration of four hundred Years, to be reckoned from the Birth of *Iaac*. This was always taken, by the *Jewish* Nation, as an absolute Grant from God to *Abraham* and his Seed, or Posterity, for ever. But not only the Nature and Reason of the Thing, but even the express Declarations of God in the Transaction itself, proves it to have been a conditional Promise or proper Covenant, and that all the Benefits and Blessings of the Grant depended on certain Terms, and foederal Obligations mutually stipulated and agreed on between God and *Abraham*. God herein promised to be a God to *Abraham* and his Seed, or Posterity, for ever, to settle them in the everlasting, peaceable Possession of the Land of *Canaan*, and that they should not only be happy themselves, but prove a Blessing to all Nations: Provided that *Abraham* himself would continue to worship the only true God, and establish this true Religion and Worship in his own Family, and that his Family and Posterity after him would continue in the same Religion and Worship of the

the one true God, and by all their Power and Influence bring the other Nations of the World into the same State of fœderal, true Religion. Now this was a wise and reasonable Transaction between God and *Abraham*, and had the Conditions been performed by *Abraham's* Family and Posterity, no Doubt but the Grant on God's Part had been made good. But how well *Abraham's* Family and Offspring, in after Ages, kept to this fœderal Agreement, and perform'd the Conditions of it, is sufficiently known. It is certain, that after their going out of *Egypt*, notwithstanding their extraordinary Deliverance, they could scarce be parallel'd, by any other Nation upon Earth, for their gross Ignorance, Superstition and moral Wickedness, which ran through all their successive Generations, till their final Dissolution and Destruction, while with a most amazing Stupidity and Impudence they continued to claim the Blessings of the *Abrahamick* Covenant, as God's peculiar People. And yet this gross Ignorance and Superstition of the *Jews* have been out-done, if possible, by some Christians, who have ventured to espouse their Quarrel, and justify their stupid Cause against God and Providence, by pretending, that since God has not yet made good this Promise to *Abraham* and his Seed, he must raise *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* from the Dead, and put them, with their

Posterity, into the everlasting Possession of this Land before the Scriptures can be fulfill'd. That this has been the Opinion of some great Christian Schematists, I need not prove; but I would not mention their Names in such Derision, and am really sorry, that any Sort of Scripture Criticism should lead Men so far out of the Way of Reason and common Sense.

But this Nation, thus settled in their Vanity and Presumption, interpreted all the future Declarations of God, by the Prophets, in their Favour, as absolute, unconditional Grants. Another famous Instance of this is in the Case of *David*, after God, in the Course of Providence, had given him the Kingdom, and enabled him to conquer and take Possession of the whole Country, which he had at first conditionally promised to *Abraham*. And now they thought, that after four hundred Years Delay beyond the first Promise, God at last had made good his Word, and *David's* Throne and Kingdom must surely be established for ever. And this they imagined, was fully insured to them, by the Prophet *Nathan*, who declared from God the Perpetuity of *David's* Kingdom, or the Succession of the Crown in his House, without any Condition express'd. The Prophet's Declarations, upon this Occasion, are very full and home to the Point of a perpetual, uninterrupted Succession

cession of the Crown in that Family, and *David* himself seems to have understood him in the absolute Sense, 2 *Sam.* xii. 16---29. where the literal Expressions are very strong for the perpetual Establishment of the Kingdom in *David's* Family, and the King understands it accordingly, as v. 28, 29. *Therefore now, O Lord God, for thou art God and thy Words are true, and thou hast told this Goodness unto thy Servant; therefore now let it please thee to bless the House of thy Servant, that it may continue for ever before thee; for, O Lord God, thou hast spoken it, and let the House of thy Servant be blessed for ever with thy Blessing.* These Expressions seem very plain and full for the Perpetuity of *David's* House in that Kingdom; and yet it is certain, that the Prophet was to be understood conditionally, or that this Promise should be made good, so far as *David* and his Successors should render themselves worthy of such a Blessing. For the Kingdom continued in the House of *David* but one Generation longer, and immediately upon the Death of *Solomon* ten of the twelve Tribes revolted under *Jeroboam*, encouraged and supported by the Power of *Egypt*. Upon this Defection the revolted Tribes, who were a great Majority of the Nation, turned off to the *Egyptian* Idolatry, and never more returned to their Obedience, or regarded the Law of *Moses*;

tho' they remain'd in the Country after this about two hundred and sixty Years, when the *Assyrians* under *Salmanasser* carry'd them into Captivity, from which Captivity they never returned, and have never since been known or heard of, as a distinct Body or separate People. Thus the Kingdom of *Israel* was rent from the House of *David*, above three thousand four hundred and fifty Years ago, and no Tale or Tidings have been ever brought of them to this Day. The Tribe of *Juda*, indeed, with some small Gleanings of the other Tribes, continued subject to Princes of *David's* Family one hundred and twenty Years longer, or till the *Babylonish* Captivity. After which, no Prince of that Family ever came to the Throne. After this last Captivity they continued subject to the *Babylonians*, *Persians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans* in their successive Generations, till the vulgar Year of Christ one hundred and thirty six, when, after a bloody War with the *Romans*, they were intirely destroyed, and exterminated by *Adrian*, with a Decree which made it Death for any *Jew* ever to settle in that Country more. And since that Time, which is now sixteen hundred Years ago, they have been absolutely dissolved as a Nation or Body politick, and have never subsisted under any Government at all.

As these People always understood the *Abrahamick* Covenant in an absolute Sense, and vainly

vainly imagined, that God must certainly make good his Part, though they had never done theirs; so, after the Revolt of the Kingdom from the House of *David*, at the Death of *Solomon*, they understood all the Promises concerning a national Restoration in the same absolute Sense. From these Promises and Declarations of the Prophets, they were immoveably fix'd in this Persuasion, that God, in the Course of Providence, would certainly and infallibly restore the Kingdom to *Israel*, under a Prince whom he would raise up of the Family or Line of *David*, and that this Kingdom, in the same House, would be establish'd for ever, and become universal; or that God would then give *Israel the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession*. This was the vain Hope, the gross Ignorance, and the wicked Presumption of that wretched, deluded People. They all along expected that God should save and deliver them by Miracles and immediate Power, without the necessary Condition and Qualification of their own Repentance and Reformation. And it is highly probable, that the old Stories they had among them of their miraculous Deliverances and Successes, at the first Institution of their Government (understanding them as they did in the popular, dramattick Sense) might prove the chief Occasion of that national Blind-

ness, Obduracy, and Impenitency in all their successive Generations. God has given Men sufficient, natural, and moral Means of Happiness, where they will use them. In the rational Use of these Means there can be no Need of Miracles, and without such a Use of Means all the Miracles in the World can signify nothing. Neglecting the rational, human Means, which God has ordain'd and established in the Course of Providence, and depending on Miracle, immediate Interposition, and uninstrumental, divine Agency, is the most dangerous and fatal Presumption, as it is the strongest Hold of Ignorance and Error, and the most incurable Malady of this Kind. This, *Theophanes*, was the very Life and Soul of *Judaism*, or rather of *Egyptianism*, which the *Jewish* Nation for ever retain'd, and had therefore no great Reason to boast of their Deliverance; since as acted still upon the same Principles, they were the same wretched People from first to last, till their Principles had destroy'd them, and convinced the whole World, how much they were the peculiar Favourites of Heaven. This was the presumptuous Hope of *Israel*; but how far this Spirit of Infatuation afterwards prevail'd among Christians, or by what Methods such an Antichristian Tare came to be transplanted into the Church of Christ by *Peter's* Successors, may be more fully considered in the Course of this Debate; in
which

which I shall all along take *St. Paul* for my Guide, as the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, and hope you will take care to correct me, if I should happen to wrong *St. Peter*, or abuse his modern Disciples.

Theoph. But before we come to *Peter* and *Paul*, I must beg Leave to talk with you a little farther about *Moses* and the Prophets. We are agreed, that the People of *Israel* at first, and their Remains afterwards, called *Jews*, were a most untoward, grossly ignorant, amazingly superstitious, and desperately wicked Generation of Men. It is likewise granted, that this Spirit and Temper might have been in great Measure contracted and confirmed in *Egypt*; a Country which by divine Permission, in the Course of Providence, they had enslav'd and ruin'd. But then, I want to know, whether their Prophets and Priests were not equally *Egyptianiz'd*? Or whether the poor People had any sufficient Means of better Information? It seems to me, that the Prophets talk'd very much in the miraculous, supernatural Strain, and made themselves the infallible Oracles from God to the People.

Philal. You have brought this Matter to a proper Issue: And, therefore, I shall first prove, that these Prophets were not infallible, and that they never believ'd themselves to be so; and then shew the Necessity they were under to talk as they did, and to leave that

that popular, dramattick Sense, or political Construction in all their Prophecies, Preachings, and Declamations to the common People.

Theoph. I think you have here cut yourself out Work enough; for the Thing you are to prove, is, that the Prophets were always either Fools or Knaves.

Philal. You may possibly be mistaken. For there is certainly a Medium between *Folly* and *Knavery*, and that is *human Prudence*. And if you did not allow this, it would be impossible for wise and good Men to deal either with Fools or Knaves; or, which is the same Thing, they could not live in the World.

Theoph. I must confess I cannot well deny your Distinction; but still I want to know how you will bring off the Prophets; for it seems they were neither *Fools* nor *Knaves*, but *prudent Men*. They could falsify and deceive without Injury, and secure their own private Interest for the publick Good. Now this, *Philaletes*, is the Philosopher's Stone in Morality, and a Secret which you are farther to explain; and when you have done this, you will have made me a Prophet.

Philal. If this be all, I doubt not but to give you the prophetick Spirit very soon.

Theoph. The sooner the better; for I would fain be a Prophet without giving up either my Understanding or Integrity. But, I hope,
you

you would not make me a Politician at the Expence of both, or either of these.

Philal. By no Means, *Theophanes*. You shall be a wise and a good Man, and yet a Prophet and a Politician too. And till you can enter into this Secret, you will know nothing of human Nature or human Life.

Theoph. This is all talking at random, and shooting flying. But, pray, Sir, regard the Mark, prove what you have undertaken. You have set up, I think, three Marks; but first let me see you hit one of them.

Philal. I am first then to prove, that the old prophetick Spirit was not infallible; and that *Moses* and the Prophets did not so understand it; but considered it only as the best dernier Resort at that Time, and under such Circumstances.

Theoph. You aim directly at this first and principal Mark; and when you have hit it, I shall think you a Prophet yourself.

Philal. I can assure you I desire no such Honour. The Character of common Sense and Honesty is the utmost of my Ambition. But not to ramble farther, the Spirit of Prophecy in *Israel*, or the Spirit of infallibly declaring the Mind and Will of God, as you would have it, took two different Turns, or distinct, popular Appearances. From the Days of *Moses* to *Samuel*, the Oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim* was establish'd as the last Resort in Judgment, beyond which there could
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be no Appeal, and which, therefore, the People look'd upon, at first, as the infallible Voice and ultimate Decision of God in all doubtful Matters. But the Voice of this Oracle was soon found to be only the Voice of the Priest, which was always the Voice of God.

But of this first and grand Device, I must beg Leave to give a short History. While this People remain'd in *Egypt*, they had been much amus'd and surpriz'd with the infallible Declarations and Decisions of *Jupiter Hamon*; and the Priests here spoke oracularly from an Image, and had often Power and Interest enough to fulfil their own Predictions, and to bring about in Fact what they declared should happen: Or if they could not do this, the Doubtfulness and Ambiguity of the oracular Declaration always gave them Room enough for an Evasion. For the Oracle was never particular enough to be tied down to Time and Circumstances; but all such Defects might be easily supply'd by a strong Faith and warm Imagination.

As soon as *Israel* came out of *Egypt*, or within three Months after their most wonderful Deliverance, they fell into the *Egyptian* Idolatry. And notwithstanding all the Miracles they had seen there, and their miraculous Passage through the Red Sea, they made a Calf, as the Object of their religious Worship, and ascrib'd their Deliverance to the Gods of *Egypt*. And after all the Miracles

rales of *Egypt*, and the awful Manner of giving the Law, because God did not conquer their Enemies, as they expected, but left it to themselves, they were just upon the Point of making themselves a Captain, to return and surrender themselves upon such Conditions as the *Egyptians* would give them, which *Moses*, with great Difficulty, and much Intreaty prevented; though he could never bring them to stand another Battle in forty Years after they had first try'd their Strength, with very ill Success, against the *Amalekites*. The General saw very well how little could be expected from such an Army of Bigots and blind Enthusiasts, who expected that God should have done all for them in a miraculous Way. And this, doubtless, was the Reason, that he would never afterward attempt to penetrate into the Country, till he had raised up another Generation of Soldiers more enured to Hardships, and better disciplin'd in War. But during this Interval of forty Years, the *Palestines* had Time to fortify their Towns, to discipline their Forces, to furnish themselves with Horse, and to put themselves in a Posture of Defence. It cannot be doubted, but when *Moses* undertook the Conquest of *Canaan*, he was perfectly well acquainted with the Situation and State of the Country. He had liv'd upon their Borders forty Years before his Return into *Egypt*, and undertaking this War, and
knew

knew the *Canaanites* at that Time to be open, naked, defenceless and secure. And had the *Israelites* at that Time had any natural Courage and Resolution, they might easily have made themselves Masters of the whole Land. And, indeed, that six hundred thousand Men in Arms, from twenty to sixty Years of Age, after they had endured so much Hardship in the Wilderness, should not be able to make themselves Masters of a Country not a fourth Part so big as *England*, was rather a miraculous Cowardice or Curse than a miraculous Conquest. For, it is certain, that *Josbua*, when he attempted this Conquest, after the Death of *Moses*, could possess himself but of a very small Part of the Country, or a Tract of Land upon the Mountains not much larger than some of our Counties. But as these Southern Mountaineers of *Palestine*, the *Amalekites*, had so bravely defended their Country upon the first Invasion and Attack, by a proud, insulting Enemy, who boasted themselves as the peculiar Favourites of Heaven, and expected a miraculous Conquest; *Israel*, upon this great Mortification and Disappointment, vow'd an eternal Revenge against *Amalek*, and never to give them Rest as long as they had any Name or Remains left upon the Earth. But whoever considers the History of this People, from the Days of *Moses* to *David*, must see, that the *Abrakamick* Promise of *Canaan* had

had never been made good to them, for above four hundred Years after the Time for it was expired. And this is a Demonstration, that they had mistaken the Nature and Design of that Promise or Covenant, which was not absolute, and to be fulfill'd by Miracles, as they vainly expected, but conditional, and depending on their own Repentance and Courage, or natural and moral Conduct. But as *Moses* and the Prophets could not new-make or *unegyptianize* this People, they were forced to govern and apply to them in their own Way of Superstition, and in which the Law of Nature, and the common Methods of God's providential Government, could not at all affect them. And, therefore, *Moses* gave them a Law, not as a Law or Religion of Nature, but as the immediate Voice and positive Will of God, the Grounds and Reasons of which they were never to examine or enquire into, nor to look upon it either as founded in the eternal, immutable Fitness of Things, or the Result of any human Wisdom and Prudence. And having this Opinion of their Law in general, they made no Distinction between Morals and Rituals, between eternal, immutable, and temporary and mutable Obligations, or between the Laws of Nature, and the perfect Reverse of them. I have said enough of the Temper and Genius of this People, and of the gross Ignorance and deep-riverted Superstition

perstition which they had contracted in *Egypt*. And now let us see the natural Effects and Consequences of this; upon what Principles *Moses* and the Prophets governed them, and how necessary it was to influence and direct such a Generation in such a political Way.

I. Then, it is absolutely necessary, to the Ends of Government, that in every Society there should be some dernier Resort, or ultimate Appeal in Judgment. And this last and ultimate Appeal in *Israel*, by the Establishment of *Moses*, was to the Oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*. That this last Decision was made by the High Priest as a living Oracle, and that he gave his Answers, *Viva Voce*, while he sat with the *Urim* and *Thummim* in Judgment, is so very evident from all the original Texts relating to it, that I should think it needless to consider the trifling Disputes, and different Opinions of the modern *Jews*, and other learned Men about it. But the Case, in Fact, was, I think, plainly this: The High Priest, when clothed in his Pontificalibus, and sitting in Judgment upon difficult Cases, and Questions proposed to him, put on his oracular Breast-Plate of *Urim* and *Thummim*, or of *Truth* and *Righteousness*, in which were engraved on twelve precious Stones, the Names of the twelve Tribes of *Israel*. And while he wore this, sitting in Judgment, it was presumed, that

that he could be neither mistaken himself, nor impose upon others, or that on this Occasion he was both infallible and impeccable, or that his Voice and oracular Decision was the undoubted organized Voice of God. It is not at all improbable, that the Priest thus sitting in Judgment, and delivering his Oracles, might alter his natural Tone, Air and Action, to humour the Conceit that he was under a supernatural and divine Impression. But however that be, it is certain, that this Oracle was neither infallible nor impeccable. A remarkable Proof of this happened under the High Priesthood of *Phinebas*, the Grandson of *Aaron*, and which, therefore, could not have been more than eighty Years after the *Palestine* Conquest. The Occasion of this, was a Quarrel which happened between the *Benjamites*, and a certain *Levite*, with his eloped Concubine or Whore; upon which that whole Tribe, by the Decision of the Oracle, was doom'd to Destruction: And that this was done without the least Truth, natural Honour, or common Justice, seems evident from the Story itself, which we find in the three last Chapters of the Book of *Judges*.

This Affair, as related by the *Hebrew* Historian, stands thus: The Concubine of a certain *Levite*, having play'd the Whore, and eloped from her Husband, fled to her Father's House, where she was taken, and entertained

tertained four Months: The *Levite*, by this Time, being softened, and willing to forgive the Woman, went to the House, with an Intention to make up the Matter, and be reconciled to her. He was joyfully receiv'd, and his Terms of Accommodation accepted. They stay'd together three Days, making *merry and chearing their Hearts*: But the fourth Day, early in the Morning, the *Levite* arose, made every Thing ready, and was resolv'd to set out; but the old Man, the Father-in-Law, with his Importunity kept for the Morning; and then, having got him into a proper Temper, prevailed with him to spend the whole Day, and stay one Night longer. This was complied with; but the next, or fifth Day, the *Levite* rose up early, and had determin'd to set out as the Day before: But the old Man was still importunate with him to stay longer; he kept him merry till the Evening, and then would fain have persuaded him to stay another Night (which perhaps he ought to have done) but the *Levite* was now unper-suadable, and resolv'd to set out, tho' it was very late in the Afternoon. Accordingly they set out in the Journey at this Time of the Day, tho', by the Story, they had better have stay'd, and took the Morning for it. By that Time they came to *Jebuah*, or *Jerusalem*, the Sun went down upon them: The *Levite's* Servant not thinking it fit to go any farther, would have persuaded his Master

to turn in, and stop there; but the Man was now unperfuadable, and resolved to proceed on the Journey. They went forward, and, as it appears by the Story, came to *Gibeab* of *Benjamin*, just in the Dusk of the Evening, or at the Close of Twilight. When they came there, no Man would receive them into his House, tho' they wanted neither Provender for their Asses, nor Provision for themselves; till an old Man returning from his Work, just as it was dark, took them in, and gave them Lodgings, as it seems, to prevent worse Consequences. How this new-reconciled Couple had behaved themselves, upon their coming into the Town at Night, why no Man would receive them, tho' they wanted no Provision either for themselves or Asses, or by what Means they had raised such a Mob about them, is not said. But this is plain, from the Story itself, that the Woman, before her Elopement, had been a common Whore, that the Man was exceedingly enamoured of her, and resolved to fetch her home, and be reconciled to her at any Rate, and that they had been highly regaled and cheared for five Days together, before they came into this Town, and that they had sat out from the old Man's, or Father-in-Law's House, late in the Afternoon, when they ought to have stay'd all Night, and took the Morning for it. The Consequence was, that after the good old *Ephraimite* had taken

them in, and given them Protection, a violent outraging Mob, in the Middle of the Night, beset the House, and threatened Destruction to himself and Family, if he did not give up the Man whom they had seen with his Concubine in the Streets. The old *Ephraimite* and the *Levite* were now chearing their Hearts, and making merry together, as the Text tells us. The *Ephraimite* having no other Way to satisfy or appease the Mob, offers to bring out his own Daughter, a Virgin, and the *Levite's* Concubine, or rather Whore to them, to do as they pleased with them. The *Levite* wanted no Provisions or Money, but had brought with him wherewithal to regale himself and the Family too; and, therefore, he begg'd that the Man might be spared. Upon this Offer, the Mob did not insist upon the Daughter, or young Virgin Lady, but were content with the Concubine, or Whore. Having thus got her, they force and ravish her to Death, and gave her too much of what she had liked but too well before. The *Levite* rises in the Morning, without seeming to know any Thing that happened in the Night; he found his Concubine lying at the Door, he calls to her to rise, and tells her he was going, but she makes no Answer, and he soon saw that she was dead, and was thereupon told what had happened in the Night. He takes her up dead, carries home the Carcass,

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cuts her in twelve Pieces, and sends them, with the Story told in his own Way, thro' all the Tribes of *Israel*. The People are hereupon intraged, they assemble as one Man, they vow Revenge, and resolve upon the Destruction of the whole Tribe, without Satisfaction given. The *Levite* is called and examined, and his Report taken, without any farther Inquiry. They send to *Gibeab* of *Benjamin*, demanding the Criminals, on Pain of the utter Destruction and Extirpation of the Tribe without Mercy. The *Benjamites* refuse to deliver up any of their Citizens, as nothing could be charged on any particular Persons. Upon this they consulted the Oracle, by whose Advice the War was resolved upon. The other Tribes, tho' ten to one in Number, were repulsed and routed two Days successively, with the Loss in both Battles of forty thousand Men. They consulted the Oracle again, and humbled themselves for a whole Day. They are directed to renew the War, and promised Success. They succeeded by a Stratagem of an Ambuscade; having pretended a Flight as before, and drawn the Men of the City out of the Town, the Men lying in wait set the City on Fire, and at the same Time the Men of *Israel* returning upon them slew twenty-five thousand that Day. And the next Day, returning from the Pursuit, they cut off the whole Tribe, Men, Women and Children,

excepting six hundred Men who had saved themselves by escaping to the Mountains. In this Outrage they had spared no Women that could make Wives for the six hundred Men which happened to escape of the whole Tribe. The Tribe of *Benjamin*, about forty Years after the *Exodus*, or a little before their Entrance into *Canaan*, had been numbered at forty-five thousand six hundred Men, from twenty to sixty; therefore, the Number of Souls, Men, Women and Children, could not have been less than two hundred and fifty thousand: And as this War happened seventy or eighty Years after, the Number of Souls in the whole Tribe cannot be supposed to have decreased. The other Tribes in this War lost forty thousand Men in two Battles, wherein they were routed, tho' they had brought together four hundred thousand Men for the Destruction of this one single Tribe. And, therefore, upon a moderate Computation, taking the Story as it lies, we must suppose, that not less than three hundred thousand Lives or Souls were sacrificed upon this Quarrel, relating to a *Levite* and his Whore. But no sooner was Vengeance executed, and the Rage a little abated, but the *Israelites* began to repent; they are struck with Remorse and Shame, they humble themselves before the Lord, and expostulate with the Oracle or High Priest why this was suffered, or how it came about, that a whole

whole

whole Tribe must perish out of *Israel*. They had all made a solemn Oath under a Curse, that no Man should give his Daughter as a Wife to a *Benjamite*, and they had not spar'd a Woman of that Tribe. And now let us see how one Wickedness brought on another, and what Methods they took to evade the Oath. The first Contrivance was, to destroy a Town who had not involv'd themselves in the same Difficulties, or been any ways concerned in this most unrighteous Effusion of Blood. Now they found, upon Enquiry, that the Town of *Jabesh Gilead* had sent no Succours to this bloody Slaughter, and therefore they selected twelve thousand chosen Men to go up and put the Town, Men, Women and Children to the Sword, only sparing such Virgins as were ripe for Marriage, and that might make Wives for the six hundred *Benjamites*: But of these they found but four hundred in the whole City. And, therefore, two hundred Maids were still wanting, and they had no other Town or City to destroy, which still put them to farther Shifts, and set them upon this Contrivance: The Daughters, Virgins, or young Ladies of *Shiloh*, had an annual Feast, in which they used to dance in the Fields; and during this Festival, the two hundred Men of *Benjamin*, who yet lacked Wives, were ordered to lie in wait, and every Man to catch a Wife among these Maids, such as he liked best. And thus

they furnished six hundred Men with Wives, by adding one Wickedness to another, and finishing the most perfect Piece of Malice, Revenge and Villainy, in the Name of the Lord. And the *Hebrew* Historian was so conscious of the moral Wickedness and Iniquity of all this, that he concludes the Story with these remarkable Words: *In those Days there was no King in Israel, but every Man did that which was good in his Eyes.* But he seems to have forgot what he had just before told us, that there was a High Priest in *Israel* at that Time, as the living Oracle of God, even *Phinebas* the Grandson of *Aaron*; and that nothing had been done in this whole Affair, but under his Council and Direction.

Now, it is evident here, that the Oracle was neither infallible nor impeccable; so far from it, that he encouraged and prompted the People to the most bloody and cruel Outrage that had ever been known or heard of; and an Injury done to a single *Levite* was thought fit to be revenged, by cutting off a whole Tribe, Root and Branch, without any Regard to natural Justice, or the least Bowels of Mercy and Compassion. How this drunken *Levite* and his Whore behaved themselves, with what Decency and Civility on their coming into the City, is not said: But this is plain, that they had raised a Mob about them which had like to have done more Mischief. And when the whole Mob
of

of a Town was up in the Middle of the Night, it must have been impossible to have charged any Mischief done upon particular Persons, or that the Magistrates of *Gibeab* should give up the Rioters as demanded by the other Tribes, and by the High Priest. But the Historian knew very well, that this Affair would not bear a particular Relation as to the Occasion and Circumstances which made such an Uproar in *Gibeab*; tho' from what he hath said, one may easily guess at the true Grounds of this popular Outrage. But from this Time the Oracle fell into Disgrace, since we hear no more of it for above three hundred Years, or till the Days of *David*. And tho' this Prince, while he was under his Difficulties and Distresses, consulted this priestly Oracle three or four Times, yet when he came to be settled in the Kingdom, we hear no more of it, nor do we ever find it mentioned, consulted, or regarded after.

It is very plain, from the History itself, that the Credit of this Oracle sunk, and declined with the Reputation of the Priests, who, by the Time of *Samuel*, were intirely fallen off from their original Institution of Learning and Sobriety, and degenerated into the grossest State of Ignorance and Vice; in-somuch that by their scandalous Behaviour in the Days of *Eli* and *Samuel*, they were perfectly scorned and despised by the meanest of the People,

Samuel,

Samuel, therefore, saw the Necessity of setting up a new Institution or Order of Men, that might restore Learning and Virtue, keep the People to the moral Law, and restrain the Vices both of the Priests and People: And this was the prophetick Order, or liberal Society, for which he established a School, or founded an Academy at *Naioth*. Here those who were thought fit to be devoted to Learning, Study and Retirement, were brought up and instructed in all the Wisdom and Knowledge of that Age, and so much of it as *Samuel* could retrieve from its antient Ruins. They here study'd History, Rhetorick, Poetry, and the Knowledge of Nature; but above all Moral Philosophy, or the Knowledge of God, Providence, and human Nature; which by the Antients was emphatically, and by way of Eminence, call'd *Wisdom*, and esteem'd as the chief Part of human Knowledge and Learning. The moral Rules and Laws to be observ'd in this Society were very strict and severe; they were to live in a low, abstemious Way, retired from the World, without Ambition or Avarice, and wholly devoted to Contemplation and Study. They were to exemplify as well as preach the most perfect Righteousness and rigid Virtue, and to rebuke and correct Vice where-ever they found it, without the least Respect of Persons, or Regard to any Dignities or Distinctions in Life. They were to denounce

denounce the Judgments of God against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness whatever, and to deal herein as freely and as home with the Prince as with the Slave. They were never to involve themselves in secular Affairs, to push at Fortune, or to make any great Figure or splendid Appearance in the World, but to eat, drink and clothe in the lowest, simplest and most moderate Way. Now this was certainly a most wise and excellent Constitution, and such an Example in the Preachers of Righteousness must needs give their moral Discourses of God and Providence, and their Representations of Nature, the greater Weight and Influence with the People. And such an Order or Society must, doubtless, have gone farther in reforming the Nation, had not the Priests before this plunged the People into such a Depth of Ignorance, Superstition and Vice, that the Prophets, with all their Art, Application and Address, were never able to recover them out of it: But, instead of this, turned Prophecy itself into Superstition, and persecuted even to Death all the Prophets that would not flatter and hold them up in it: These Prophets, by their absolute Retirement, and Devotedness to Study and Contemplation, under the strictest Regimen of Sobriety and Temperance, acquired such high Degrees of Knowledge, both natural and moral, above the Vulgar, that the common People look'd upon them, as wholly

wholly miraculous and supernatural, and believ'd they had an immediate and free Conversation with God, Angels, and departed Souls, from whom they were supposed to receive all their superior Knowledge and Intelligence. The Populace thought they knew even the very Hearts of Men, or whatever could be done under the closest Secrecy. But this popular Conceit exposed these antient Sages to great Troubles and Persecutions from the gross, ignorant Multitude, who minding their Fate, more than their Duty, expected to know from them all that should befall them in the Course of Providence, whether Good or Evil. Upon this superstitious Notion, instead of *Preachers of Righteousness*, they would have made their Prophets *Fortune-Tellers*, as the most important Business they had for them. The proper Business of the Prophets, and the Design of their Institution and Order, was to preach moral Truth and Righteousness; to keep the People to the moral Law, and bring them to Repentance, as the necessary Means of their Happiness and Safety, and the only Condition of divine Favour. The Prophets were to declare Good or Evil from God, and to pronounce his Promises or Threatnings, Mercies or Judgments, in Consequence of the People's moral Conduct, and as they should prepare and dispose themselves, either for one or the other.

ther. When they saw any Tendency or Disposition in the People towards Repentance and Reformation, they declared Good to them, but otherwise Evil; as God was certainly the Rewarder of Virtue, and Punisher of Vice. And this was, undoubtedly, the Nature and Design of the prophetic Order and Office. But this most stupid Generation always understood the Matter otherwise, and still expected Declarations of Good, and certain national Deliverance, from the Principles of Preordination and absolute Decrees in their Favour, and which they expected from God in Consequence of his Covenant with *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, which they understood as an absolute Promise or Decree. The Prophets could never beat them out of this; and to escape the popular Fury, were often obliged to humour them in it, and to deliver many Promises and Declarations of Good to the Nation, in absolute Terms, which were plainly intended as conditional. And, therefore, as often as they pronounc'd any Judgments from God, or impending Calamity for the Sins of the Nation, they always promised a future Deliverance, in which Repentance, and national Reformation, was always presuppos'd, tho' often as a *Subintelligitur*, and not express'd. And thus they deceived themselves from Time to Time, and still grew worse and worse
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in Expectation of a national Deliverance upon their own predestinarian Principles, till at length divine Patience being quite worn out, they were finally given up, as incorrigible, and absolutely destroy'd and dissolv'd as a Nation or People.

Theoph. You seem here to be overthrowing an Opinion, in which almost all Christians have agreed with the whole *Jewish* Nation; that their Prophecies, relating to their final Deliverance and Restoration to their antient Kingdom, Prosperity, and Independency, were absolute Predictions of what must certainly come to pass. And if this be not so, I cannot see how to account for the Truth and Sincerity of most of the Prophets, for upon any other Supposition it seems plain, that either the Prophets were deceiv'd themselves, or intended to impose on the People, and buoy them up in a false Hope and groundless Expectation.

Philal. There are many Instances, which might soon be produced, in which the Prophets deliver themselves in absolute Terms, as to Things future, while a Condition must necessarily be supposed and understood, particularly the Perpetuity, and uninterrupted Succession of the Crown or Kingdom of *Israel* in the House of *David*, which was promised by *Nathan* the Prophet in the most absolute Terms; and in which Sense *David* himself plainly understood it. And yet 'tis
certain,

certain, that this was a conditional Promise, only on Supposition that *David* and his Successors should render themselves worthy of it; because the Kingdom of *Israel* revolted from the House of *David* immediately upon the Death of *Solomon*, and hath never been restored since. And why then should you think, that all the after Promises of a Restoration of the Kingdom to his Family by a Messiah, were any more absolute, than the Promise to *David* of Continuance of it, without any such Interruption? Especially since I have, as I think, fully prov'd, that the original Promise made to *Abraham* and his Seed, was strictly and properly a Covenant or conditional Grant, and that it was never fulfill'd or made good in the absolute Sense. And besides, what are the Christians a doing while they maintain this absolute Sense of these Prophecys, but upholding the *Jews* in their antient Superstition, and supporting the Principles of Fatalism and Predestination against the Nature and Condition of free Agency, and all the rational Methods of God's moral Government? In short, *Theophanes*, if Providence hath not sufficiently explain'd itself already as to these Matters, I think we can learn nothing from Providence at all.

As to your great and main Objection relating to the Truth and Sincerity of the Prophets, I think, I had in great Measure obviated

ated it before, by observing, that the Prophets were under a Necessity, in this and many other Cases, of accommodating themselves to the Passions, Prejudices, and rooted Superstition of the Nation, or People to whom they were sent. And had they not made some such prudential Allowances, or seeming Concessions, they could have done no Good at all, and scarce any one of them would have been suffered to live.

Theoph. I must own, that your Argument seems pretty strong, and that you have made a very good, prudential Excuse for the Prophets; supposing the Matter to be as you apprehend it. The Prophets, it seems, could not always venture to speak out the plain Truth, and when that was the Case, they accommodated themselves a little, as to their Manner of Expression, to the vulgar Superstition and Prejudices, and went as far as they dared. But then, I hope, you will allow, that these Prophets were not barely Philosophers and Moralists; but that they had in some Cases, at least, the Knowledge of Things future communicated to them in a supernatural Way.

Philal. No Doubt but Men of their Character, in their Recess from the Business and Pleasures of the World, free from Avarice or Ambition, and who nicely observ'd the Conduct of Providence, and the various Turns and Revolutions of States and Kingdoms

doms in their very Beginnings and first Occasions; could know more, and see farther than others, who were immerfed in Pleasure or Bufinefs, and whose Lufts and Appetites blinded them, and kept them from feeing Things, that were neareft at Hand. And this might enable the Prophets, upon rational Principles, and the common Methods of Providence, to give a very near Guefs at what would happen, efppecially, as to the great Changes and Turns of Nations and Governments.

The Prophets, when they ftruck at future Events, were not very particular and circumftantial, as to Time, Place, Perfons, &c. They generally deliver thefe Prefages in very dark and obfcure Terms, and only relate, for the moft Part, their Dreams and Vifions of the Night, the Interpretation of which is extremely difficult, and may be apply'd to a thoufand different Events from that Time to this, and fo on to the End of the World; as all our modern Prophets or Interpreters of Prophecy have fufficiently prov'd. But by this Means the antient Prophets in great Meafure faved themfelves, and were not often accountable for Particulars in Futurity, while they were foothing the fuperftitious People with an imaginary Knowledge of what was to come. But whenever they prophesied Evil, and it came to pafs, they were hated and perfecuted for it; though
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they foretold nothing, but what was imminent, and which every Man, with Eyes in his Head, must have foreseen as unavoidable. As in the Case of *Jeremiah* before the *Babylonish* Captivity, and in which they had no possible Way, in human Appearance, of resisting the *Chaldeans*: Yet they still expected a miraculous Deliverance in Spite of all their Wickedness, which had ripened them for Destruction. And, therefore, they persecuted this Prophet with the utmost Malice and Revenge, because he would have saved them, and prevented that Desolation, by submitting to so powerful and irresistible an Enemy; and would have put him to Death, had not the *Babylonians* protected him. The *Assyrian* Conquest and Captivity had been foretold, or rather seen in the same Manner, and might have been prevented, and the Country spared, had the People been capable of common Prudence, or paid the least Regard to Providence. But they were far above this, and still assured themselves, that God would protect and save them for the Sake of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and that he would always deliver them for his Covenant's Sake, as he had done out of *Egypt*.

'Tis certain, that the Treatment the Prophets met with in *Israel*, was enough to drive them out of their Wits, or to make them absolutely despair of ever serving so wretched
and

and wicked a Nation. And, indeed, the Event was, that they had so long taught the Prophets what they ought to prophesy, and what Doctrines they must preach, till at length no Prophet could live among them. And nothing but Experience, and the Miseries they suffered for their Pride, Obstinacy, and Superstition, could ever have given them the least Notion of the Necessity of Obedience and Submission to any other Nation. And it was this Humour, and predestinarian Faith prevailing again at last against the *Romans*, which prov'd their final and utter Destruction, as a distinct Nation.

But besides this gross Superstition and *Egyptianiz'd* Temper and Genius of the People, there were several other Causes, which concurr'd gradually to lessen the Credit, and at last wholly to exterminate this prophetick Order. For, in the first Place, the Kings of *Israel* had a natural, hereditary Aversion to the Prophets from their first Foundation in the Time of *Samuel*, as knowing that one great Design of instituting this Order, was to curb and restrain the regal Power, and particularly to cut off the Inheritance from *Israel*, where the royal Power began, and to intail the Crown in the Tribe of *Judah*.

When *Samuel* could no longer stem the Torrent, but the People would needs have a King after the Manner of the other Nations;

after having entered his Protest against it, he submitted to the popular Cry, and anointed them a King, *Saul* the Son of *Kish*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*; a young Man of uncommon Strength and Stature, of great Courage, and at that Time, of untainted Virtue. This Prophet saw, for twenty Years before this, that the national Bent and Bias was for a King, and that the People would not be long managed without one. He had found, that most of the Kings in his Time, and for many Ages before, had prov'd Tyrants, and invaded the natural Rights and Properties of their Subjects, and he expected nothing else in *Israel* from the regal Power; and, therefore, before he anointed *Saul*, he represented to the People, in a very moving Oration, what their Kings would do, and how little they would gain by such a Government. As soon, therefore, as *Samuel* saw the Revolution, which must soon happen in the State, he instituted this Academick Order of Prophets, who by their Weight and Influence with the People, were to moderate and restrain the Power of the Kings, and at the same Time, keep the Princes and People too, within the Boundaries of the Moral Law. *Samuel*, to silence the Clamours, and comply with the Importunity of the People, having anointed *Saul* King, presently sent him home again, where he lived a private, retired Life, as before, for at least twenty

Years,

Years, with only the Name or Title, without the State or Dignity of a King. And during this Time, the Prophet governed all, as he had done from the Death of *Eli*, and *Saul* in Effect obey'd him, having only the Name without the Power. About twenty Years after *Saul* had been anointed, a most terrible and threatening War broke out with the *Ammonites*, who had besieged *Jabesh Gilead*, and vow'd their Destruction, for they would spare them even as Slaves, but on Condition of putting out their right Eyes. Under this Extremity, the Town send to *Saul*, begging that he would put himself at the Head of an Army, and come to their Assistance. These Messengers found the King at Plow with his Oxen in the Fields. The King hereupon resolv'd to exert himself, he cuts two Yoke of Oxen in Pieces, sends them thro' the several Tribes, requiring them to meet him by the Morning, on Penalty of having their own Oxen thus cut in Pieces. But this Summons was in *Samuel's* Name, as well as his own; for he dared not yet exercise any Act of Power independent of the Prophet. The People meet him accordingly. The *Ammonites* are entirely routed, and the Country delivered. Upon this great Deliverance, the People cry'd out, as one Man, that *Saul* should be really King, and not only in Name; that he should take upon him the State and Dignity of his Character,

ter, and that they would cut in Pieces all that should oppose it. *Samuel* being home press'd, and under a plain Necessity, propos'd to go up to *Gilgal*, and renew the Kingdom, where *Saul* was invest'd with the real State, Power, and Grandeur of a King independent of the Prophet. They had now two thousand Men to be always about him, as his constant Guards, and *Jonathan* the Prince, one thousand. That this Renewal of the Kingdom must have been not less than twenty Years after *Saul* had been first anointed, is plain, since *Saul*, when first anointed, was but a young Man, as the Text tells us, and *Josephus* saith he was then thirty; and, therefore, *Jonathan* then could be but a Child. But now *Jonathan* was grown up an expert Soldier, and the chief Captain under the King. From the Death of *Eli* to this Time, *Samuel* had exercis'd all Power, both Civil and Ecclesiastical, and had taken upon him the High Priesthood, as is plain from the History; and this could not have been less than forty Years: For *Samuel* at the Death of *Eli* was very young, and he tells the People upon this Occasion, that he had gone in and out before them from his Youth, but that he was now old and grey-headed.

Saul being thus vested with the whole Power of the Kingdom, depos'd *Samuel* from the High Priesthood, which, indeed, he

he had but usurped against the fundamental Constitution of *Moses*. And the King now put in *Abia*, who was the right Heir from *Eli*, and his Grandson. But this highly provoked and exasperated the Prophet, that from this Time he projected the Ruin of *Saul* and his Family, and was resolv'd to convince the King, that he could unmake as well as make him, and that no King of *Israel* must ever pretend to reign independent of the prophetic Order. *Samuel* now declares, that the Lord repented that he had made *Saul* King of *Israel*, i. e. the Prophet himself repented it; for it would be most absurd and senseless to imagine, that God did not know, when *Saul* was made King, what would happen; but it is plain, that *Samuel* did not know.

Soon after *Saul* had been thus establish'd in the Kingdom, or within two Years, the *Philistines* invaded the Land, and reduced them to the last Extremity; insomuch, that there was not a Smith left in *Israel* to sharpen their Swords and Spears. But under this common Calamity the Father and Founder of the Prophets, (notwithstanding the Excellency and Wisdom of his first Institution) having resolv'd upon a personal Revenge against this King and his Family, seems to have had but little Compassion for his Country. *Delenda est Carthago*, was now the Maxim, and *Saul* and his Family must be

now rooted out, and set aside, whatever might be the Consequences. But by almost a Miracle of Providence, *Saul*, and *Jonathan* his Son, conquers the *Philistines*, clears the Country of them, and settles the Nation in Peace, in Spite of all the Opposition of *Samuel*, and the Prophets.

In the Beginning of this War there was a great Desertion of the *Hebrews* to the *Philistines*, who had brought up against *Israel* thirty thousand Chariots, six thousand Horse, and People as the Sand of the Sea. In this Battle the *Philistines* gain'd a complete Victory; and of the *Israelites*, such as escaped, some deserted to the Enemy, others hid themselves, and the rest fled over *Jordan*. *Saul* himself was not in this Battle; but waited at *Gilgal* seven Days for *Samuel*, who had promised to come to him. But the Prophet seems to have look'd upon this Devastation of his Country, not only with Indifferency, but Pleasure, as thinking this was the Time in which God would destroy and set aside the King. These seven Days being out, and the Army growing mutinous and deserting, the King order'd Sacrifices of Burnt-Offerings and Peace-Offerings to implore the Divine Protection against so formidable an Enemy, and that God would dispose the Prophet to come to him, and give him his Advice under such an Exigence. As soon as *Saul* had done this, *Samuel*, who had laid
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by as unconcerned before, came and charged the King with a great Act of Wickedness and Disobedience, as having invaded the Priestly Office, for which he declared in the Name of the Lord, that the King had forfeited his Crown and Kingdom. And notwithstanding all the Beseechings and Intreaties of the King, and all the Representations he could make of the Distress he was under, the Desertion of the Army, and the impending Ruin of the Country, thro' the Prophet's own Delay; yet this had now no Manner of Effect upon the holy Man; but he left the King, with a Resolution never to see his Face more. The Prophet had, perhaps, now forgot that he himself had usurped the High Priest's Office for about forty Years, contrary to the Law of God, by *Moses*. But this was no Wonder in a Man, who could bring God himself to Repentance, and charge all his own Follies, and Want of Foresight, upon the Almighty. But whatever *Samuel* might imagine, this was not the Time for *Saul's* Overthrow. God was more merciful to the Nation, and tho' the King, by the Prophet's Management, had now but six hundred Men of the Army left with him, yet by a Miracle of Providence, he and the Prince intirely routed the *Philistines*, and clear'd the Country of them. After which the King went on for many Years, conquering with an high Hand, till he subdu'd
all

all their Enemies, and settled the Country in Peace, perhaps to the great Mortification of this Prophet.

Samuel now seeing, that all his Stratagems hitherto had prov'd ineffectual, and that *Saul* was invincible in the Field, thought of another Project, whereby to ruin him. He sent him against the *Amalekites*, as by an express Command from God. He was to destroy *Amalek* Root and Branch from the oldest Man to the sucking Child, without sparing one Soul. He was likewise to destroy all the Sheep and Cattle, without reserving any Thing in the Country, or leaving any Plunder or Booty to the Soldiers. The King undertakes this bloody Commission, and executes the most cruel and inhuman Part of it, by destroying all the Inhabitants, Men, Women, and Children; only he brought the King alive, and gave the Booty of Sheep and Cattle to the Army. It is evident here, that this was a Plot laid by the Prophet for the King's Destruction: For if he had not given the Soldiers the Booty or Plunder of the conquer'd Country, the whole Army would have mutiny'd and deserted, since this is what they had never been deny'd in all their Wars; and then the King must have fallen a Sacrifice to the disappointed and enraged Soldiery, which was, doubtless, what the Prophet intended. And, therefore, being disappointed here, he had

had no longer Patience, but hews *Agag* the King in Pieces before the Lord; and having denounced the Ruin of *Saul* and his Family before all the People, he went off, and privately anointed *David*. After this, without any Suspicion of Treason or Rebellion, he managed Matters so as to bring *David* into *Saul's* Family, where he marry'd the King's Daughter, ingratiates himself with the Prince, and obtained, by his Art and Address, the highest Honours at Court, till every Thing was ripe for the Rebellion. I forbear here to make any farther Remarks upon this Affair, as the Story speaks itself. It is plain enough, since it happened to succeed, and all was done in the Name of the Lord. But this original Quarrel, between the King and the Prophets, laid the Foundation of all the intestine Broils, Miseries and Calamities which in after Ages terminated in the Ruin of the Country, and the Extirpation both of the Kings and Prophets, who by their mutual Jealousies and Oppositions continually weakened, and at last destroyed each other.

The Crown having been cut off from *Israel*, and entailed upon *Judah*, by a long Train of Falshoods, Perjuries, Dissimulations, Ingratitude, Treason, and at last open Rebellion; and *David* having at last carried his Point, and settled himself in the Kingdom, in Opposition to all his former Vows and Protestations of Loyalty, as having no Views

to the Crown, this could not be thought to be the Work of God, tho' it had been all colour'd over with a Pretence of divine Authority. As *David* had been settled in the Kingdom, by the Interest of the Prophets, he took care to engage the Priests on his Side too. And to effect this, he at last doubled their Revenues, as they had been settled by *Moses*, and obliged all the People to bring their Sacrifices to *Jerusalem*, and to offer no where else; so that this Prince made himself the Darling, and even Idol, both of the Prophets and Priests. But the other Tribes were not able to bear the Servitude, and waited but for a fair Opportunity to break the Yoke of *Judab*, and set up for their antient Independency. And this they found an Occasion for in the next Reign; for *Solomon* not going upon his Father's Principles and Maxims of Government, lost the Interest both of the Priests and Prophets.

Solomon having thoroughly established himself in the Kingdom, took a great Number of Wives and Concubines from all the Nations round about, and thereby raised the largest and finest Seraglio that had ever been known, and this for the Majesty and Grandeur of the Thing, according to the Opinion and Custom of those Eastern Nations. At the same Time, he settled firm Alliances with *Egypt*, *Tyre*, and the chief neighbour-

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ing Princes, as the best Security of his Kingdom. Having done this, he granted a general Indulgence or Toleration for all Religions, to encourage Strangers to come and settle in the Country under his Protection, and by a Sort of Naturalization. To this Purpose, he allow'd separate Places of Worship in several Parts of *Palestine*, where People of all Nations and Religions might sacrifice in their own Way, and worship God by the Mediation and Intercession of their own Demi-Gods or subordinate Deities. Nor did this great Prince oblige his own Subjects to bring all their Sacrifices to the Temple; but indulged them in setting up several separate Places of Worship, where they might offer their Sacrifices to the true God in their own Way, or according to the Law, but without so much Trouble or Expence. Now this was certainly true Policy, and no more than a Piece of natural Justice. But then it so highly provok'd both the Prophets and Priests, that *Solomon* could never have reigned so long, and died in Peace, had it not been for his foreign Alliances. The Priests cry'd out against it as a great Wickedness, since it cut them off from the greatest Part of their Revenues arising from their Sacrifices and Absolutions, and encouraged the People to serve God without them. And the Prophets thought it an open and daring Violation of the Laws, and an Affront offered to God himself,

himself, to protect and encourage any Religion or Method of Worship in that Country, but what *Moses* had establish'd. And, therefore, they denounced the Judgments of God against the King, and no less than the Revolt of his Kingdom, though it does not appear that *Solomon* worshipp'd any but the true God, in the legal Way, himself; yet his tolerating those who did, was thought the same Thing, and tolerating Idolatry in that Country, or suffering any other Religion, but what the Law had establish'd, was reckon'd Idolatry; and it was upon this Foot, that the Prophets charged Idolatry upon *Solomon*, and most of the other Kings of *Israel* after him, for maintaining the same Indulgence, Toleration, or Liberty of Conscience. Upon the Death of *Solomon*, the ten Tribes of *Israel* revolted, as not being able any longer to bear the Yoke of *Judah*, and not thinking it their Interest to recal or revoke the Toleration, which *Solomon* had granted, and which the Priests and Prophets had so much declaim'd against. But *Solomon* being dead, his Alliances were broken, and the Kingdom not only rent into two, but engaged in a most bloody and destructive Civil War, for two hundred and sixty Years, till the Captivity and utter Extirpation of *Israel*. Within four Years after this Division of the Kingdom the *Egyptians* came up to *Judah*, rish'd the Temple, and carried
away

away all the Gold, Silver, and vast Treasures, which *David* and *Solomon* had been amassing during their whole Reigns. And thus ended all the Pride and Glory of that stately Structure, which at that Time, for its Riches and Beauty, must have been the Wonder of the World.

Solomon's Toleration had encouraged great Numbers of Priests and People from other Countries to come and settle in *Palestine*, where they had been protected, and must have added very much to the Strength and Riches of the Country: But after the Death of that great and wise Prince, this was thought a Wickedness no longer to be born. And, therefore, whenever they had got a King to their Purpose, they set him to destroying all the Priests and Worshippers of *Baal*, whether Natives or Foreigners, and by this Means they weakened and exhausted the Country, and made themselves an easy Prey to the Nations round about them, with whom they broke all their Alliances, as not thinking it lawful to maintain any Peace or Friendship with Idolators. Such was the persecuting Zeal of these holy Men, and their mistaken Notions of Religion and Conscience. Nay every King and Royal Family, who could not come into these Measures, were mark'd out for Destruction, and the most formidable and bloody Rebellions raised against them for encouraging and supporting

porting Idolatry, *i. e.* for not destroying and rooting out Idolators by Fire and Sword. And by these religious Wars and mistaken Zeal for the Lord, both Kings and Prophets were at last exterminated, and the whole Nation perfectly enslaved. This was, doubtless, one chief Reason that the Prophets lost Ground continually, and declined in their Credit and Interest with the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*, that very few of them cared to be engaged in such bloody Work, as destroying Men on the Account of Religion and Conscience. As, on the other Hand, the Priests generally hated them, for declaiming against them, and endeavouring to keep the People to the moral Law, and take them off from their superstitious Dependence upon such Sacrifices and Absolutions, by which the Priests drew in the greater Part of their Revenues. And herein the People were generally in the Interest of the Priests, as they found it much more difficult to quit their Vices, and practise Righteousness, than to observe the ceremonial Law, and thereby obtain Absolution from their ghostly Fathers.

But, besides all this, the Prophets themselves, many of them, degenerated in Time from the Strictness and Purity of their first Institution; and particularly they pretended too much to the Knowledge of Futurity. And by this Means they sometimes prophesied Lies in the Name of the Lord, as four hundred

hundred of them did at once in the Case of *Abab*. And then, as this Order grew at last exceeding numerous, so many idle Hands must have been a Burden to the State, which might put them, in their recluse Way of living, to some Shifts for a Maintenance. And as the People had a strong Passion for the Knowledge of Futurity, with Regard both to the Fate of private Persons, and of the Nation in general, and as they expected the Solution of all such Questions from the Prophets, it is not impossible but they might vie with one another, and carry those Pretensions too high, as a Means of getting Money. And this must often put them upon contriving general and doubtful Answers to save their Credit; for it cannot be supposed, that they had always an Angel, or familiar Spirit at hand, to enable them to be very particular and circumstantial in revealing such Secrets. It is evident, in the Case of *Samuel* and *Saul*, that the Prophets, at their first Institution, were supposed to be let into all Secrets; and it is not unlikely, but *Samuel* might here have the best Reason in the World to know what had betided the Asses. There are likewise several Instances to be given, in which the Prophets brought about their own Predictions, by accomplishing, in a natural Way, what they had resolv'd upon before. The Method taken by *Samuel* to set aside *Saul* and his Family,

with the Grounds and Reasons of it has been partly considered already. And it cannot be doubted, but the same Treachery, Plotting, and Contrivance must, under the same or like Circumstances, have had the same Effect in any other Case.

The Management of the Prophet *Elisha* with *Hazael*, the chief Captain of the King of *Syria*, is likewise remarkable to this Purpose. The Story is this; *Benbadad*, the King of *Syria*, in a dangerous Illness, *Elisha* being then at *Damascus*, the King sent his Servant, a chief Captain, to the Prophet, to enquire of him, whether he should recover or not? *Hazael* took a Present of forty Camels Load of the richest Goods and Treasures of *Syria*, and which was certainly a Bribe large enough for any Prince or Monarch then in the World. With this strong Argument laid before the Prophet, he asks him the Question from the King his Master, whether he might recover of this Disease? The Prophet takes the Present, and bids *Hazael* go and tell the King, that he should recover: But nevertheless, adds the Prophet, *The Lord hath shewed me, that he shall surely die.* This was a Hint between them two, and Intimation enough, that the Prophet did not design to be ungrateful for what he had taken of the Captain. After this, the Prophet looked stedfastly upon *Hazael*, and wept. *Hazael*, almost out of Countenance; asked the

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the Meaning of this. Why, saith the Prophet, *Because I know [fear] the Evil, which thou shalt do to the Children of Israel; for their strong Cities shalt thou set on fire, their young Men shalt thou slay with the Sword, dash their Infants against the Stones, and rend in Pieces their Women with Child.* Hazael not yet thoroughly entering into the Secret, stood astonished at such a Declaration from the Man of God. But the Prophet told him, that the Lord had shewed him, that he should be King of *Aram*. And having taken his Vows and Protestations, that if that should happen, he would favour *Israel*, the Prophet sent him away, having given him sufficient Instructions what he was to do. *Hazael* now goes home, and assures the King from the Prophet, that he would recover, or that his Disease was not mortal. But the next Morning finding him in a fair Way of Recovery, he took a thick Cloth dipt in Water, and spreading it upon his Face, suffocated the King, and then usurp'd the Crown, and reign'd in his Stead. 'Tis plain, that *Elisha* here put *Hazael* into a most effectual Way to obtain the Kingdom, in Hopes, that having been indebted to him for the Crown, he would favour his Country, and put an End to the War against *Israel*. But *Hazael* having sufficiently paid the Prophet for his Advice, thought himself under no farther Obligations, and there-

fore forgot all his Promises, when he came to be King of *Syria*, and made good the Prophet's Predictions, as a just Reward for such Counsel. And this shews after what Manner the Prophets sometimes consulted with God, and by what Means they accomplish'd their own Prophecies. The Reader will find a full Account of this Matter in 2 *Kings*, Chapter viii.

Solomon having, as before-mentioned, highly provok'd the Prophets, by his tolerating Idolatry, these Politicians, upon the Death of the King, projected a Revolution in Favour of *Jeroboam*, not doubting but he would be governed by them, and destroy all Idolaters, if they should give him the Crown. This *Jeroboam* was, at first, in great Favour with *Solomon*. He was a young Man of great Courage, Resolution and Abilities, and the King observing his promising Genius had made him Supervisor of all his Works in the House of *Joseph*, or over the Tribes of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*. *Abijah* the Prophet* met him one Day, and had a long Conference with him in the Fields. He laid before him, what had been intended and projected against *Solomon*, for his encouraging and tolerating Idolatry. He assured him, that the Kingdom of *Israel* was to be taken from the House of *David*, as soon as *Solomon* died, and gave *Jeroboam* to understand, that he was the Man design'd

sign'd for it, and that when he came to the Crown, if he would destroy and root out all Idols, and suffer none but the true Religion, as *David* had done, that his Kingdom over *Israel* should be firmly established. The Prophet having led *Jeroboam* into these Secrets and deep Designs of State, left him to consider, and make his own Use of it. A Man of *Jeroboam's* Courage, Ambition, and great Abilities, needed no farther Instructions; but as soon as he found the Disposition of the Prophets, and what they had resolv'd upon, he knew well enough how to play the Game, and act his proper Part towards accomplishing the Prophecy. He immediately set upon Contrivances and Machinations against the King; but being discovered, he fled into *Egypt*, where he was protected till the Death of *Solomon*. And then returning, the Plot which had been laid long enough before, and sufficiently concerted, took Effect. The ten Tribes of *Israel* revolted, and *Jeroboam* was made King of *Israel*. But never was any Set of Politicians more disappointed. *Jeroboam*, when he came to the Crown, did not think fit to exhaust his Kingdom, and break his Alliance with *Egypt*, by engaging in the bloody Work of rooting out Idolatry, and destroying Idolaters by Fire and Sword: So far from it, that he granted a larger Toleration than ever, and even indulg'd his own

Subjects, as well as Foreigners, to chuse their own Religion, and worship God in what Manner they pleased. But this Liberty of Conscience, and Piece of State Policy, so highly provok'd the Prophets, that utter Destruction was soon vow'd and resolv'd upon against *Jeroboam*, and his whole House. And this was effected within twenty four Years; for *Nadab*, the Son of *Jeroboam*, reign'd but two Years after the Death of his Father, before another Revolution was brought about in Favour of Religion: For *Baasha* now conspired against and slew him, and reign'd in his Stead. This King utterly destroy'd and cut off all the House of *Jeroboam*, as the Prophet had foretold and determined. But he still went on in the same Way of Idolatry, so that the Prophets got nothing by this Revolution. And, therefore, the Prophets sent a Deputation to *Baasha*, to let him know, that his House was likewise doom'd to Destruction, and that he must expect the same Fate with *Jeroboam* and his Family; and this happened within two Years after the Death of *Baasha*, when *Ella* his Son was murdered by his Servant *Zimri*, who usurp'd the Crown, and reign'd but seven Days; and yet, in this short Time he fulfilled the Prophecies, or executed the Vengeance of the Prophets against *Baasha*, not leaving one of his Family, Relations, or Friends to piss against the Wall. But as soon

soon as he committed this Outrage, *Omri* was set up against him by the People, who could not bear such unexempl'd Barbarity, Treason and Murder. *Omri*, who had been the chief Captain of the Host, being thus set up, and declared King by the Army, closely besieged *Zimri* in *Tirzah*, and having taken the Town, forced him to retire into the Palace, where he set the House on fire about him, and perish'd in the Flames. And this, saith the Historian, 1 *Kings* xvi. 19. was *for the Sins, which he had sinned in the Way of Jeroboam, who caus'd Israel to sin.* But one would think he had done enough for seven Days in destroying, Root and Branch, all the former Royal Family, with their Friends and Adherents; tho' he had not fallen upon the idolatrous Priests and People in general, which he ought to have done in a religious War, and which was the main Thing, it seems, expected from him. This *Omri* was the Father of *Abab*, and all this Slaughter and Blood-shed for Religion happened within forty-five Years after the Death of *Solomon*.

But after all this Struggle, when *Abab* came to the Crown, the Prophets had lost almost all their Interest, and were look'd upon as the principal Instruments of the Effusion of so much Blood, and the cruel Devastations of their Country for almost sixty Years past. *Abab*, soon after his Ac-

cession to the Crown, marry'd *Jezabel*, Daughter of *Eth-Baal*, King of *Sidon*. His Alliance with this idolatrous Family gave the Prophets great Offence, and not without Reason, for it was like to issue in the Extirpation of their whole Order, which was, perhaps, the Thing intended. Experience, by this Time, had evinced, that it was impossible for the regal Power, and prophetick Office, to subsist together; and, therefore, *Abab* hoped to have put an End to this holy Order, and thereby have cut off the Occasion of any more religious Wars. But herein he was mistaken; for the Prophets had still more Interest, and Influence with the People, than the Kings; as we shall now see.

Abab had been sufficiently convinced, by the History and Experience of above two hundred Years back, that the Prophets would never submit to the Toleration of any Religion, but their own, in that Country; and therefore, he seems to have formed a Design, and laid a Scheme, if possible, to root them out, and to establish some other Religion more friendly and beneficent to Mankind, and that might not obstruct his Alliances with other Nations. The King of *Zidon* was now a powerful Prince, and his Daughter *Jezabel* a Woman of great Policy and Contrivance, by whom he might execute his Designs, without seeming to be

directly engaged in it himself. *Jezabel*, therefore, the *Zidonian*, who was now Queen of *Israel*, laid a Scheme for the Destruction of the Lord's Prophets, and for which she seem'd to have had some Appearances of natural Justice. It is certain, that the Prophets of the Lord, as they were call'd, had greatly inflamed, divided and excited the People to Rebellion, and cut off one Royal Family after another, for above two hundred Years past, on Account of Religion. The great Wickedness charged upon the Kings of *Israel*, is their Toleration of Idolatry, or granting a Liberty of Conscience, both to Natives and Foreigners, for every Man to worship God in his own Way, either by the Mediation and Intercession of the living High Priests of *Israel*, or the dead Saints and canoniz'd Heroes of the heathen Nations, in Honour and Commemoration of whose Memories, the People had built Temples, erected Altars, and instituted Festivals. But here the Priests who managed the Festivals or Sacrifices to *Baal*, *Asheroth*, *Moloch*, and other heathen, mediatorial Deities, had never offered any Violence or Coaction to compel People into their Way and Method of Worship, nor, so far as it appears, did they ever instigate the Kings of *Israel* to persecute their Subjects upon such Account. They only desired Liberty of Conscience themselves, and were willing to grant

grant the same to all others. Nor is there any Instance to be given throughout the whole History, where any of the Kings charged with Idolatry used any Force or Violence to oblige any Body to worship the Calves, *Baal*, *Asteroth*, &c. When the revolted Tribes under *Jeroboam* fell into the *Egyptian* Idolatry, and set up the mediatorial Gods, and Festivals of *Egypt*, great Numbers of them still went up to *Jerusalem* to worship God in the legal Way, of which *Tobit* was one. And they who chose this, were not hinder'd, but left to their Liberty. So that the Crime charged upon the Kings, was not enforcing Idolatry by Law; but granting an Indulgence or Toleration to Idolators, and not destroying them by Fire and Sword, which was the religious Zeal of the Prophets, and their Concern for the Lord of Hosts. But *Jezabel* thought this Method contrary to the Law of Nature and Nations; and, therefore, she laid a Design for the Destruction and Extermination of these Prophets, as Enemies not only to their own Country, but to the common Peace and Tranquillity of the World. But she found this impracticable, it being impossible to root out the Prophets while they had so much Interest, and the People were resolved to protect them; and, therefore, when the Queen had cut off the greater Part of them, there were still enough left, no less than

than four hundred, at the latter End of *Ahab's* Reign, to conspire and effect the Destruction of this King and his Family.

But *Elijah* had taken a full Revenge before for the Death of the Prophets, whom *Jezabel* had slain. A severe Famine had afflicted the Land for three Years, during which Time every Thing had been consumed by a Drought, or Want of Rain. And this national Calamity is said to have been procured and brought on by *Elijah's* Prayers; which reduced the King to such Distress, that after he had endeavoured to cut off this Prophet, as the Cause of such a Calamity, he was forced at last to make his Court to him, and to beg his Interest and Assistance, before the Famine had quite destroy'd the Country. And accordingly Rain was procured, and four hundred and fifty of *Baal's* Priests slain, as an Expiation for the Blood of the Prophets, whom *Jezabel* had put to Death before. But *Ahab* still continued to tolerate Idolatry, and a War happening afterwards with the *Syrians*, four hundred of the Prophets, whom he consulted, conspired together to send him up to *Ramoth-Gilead*, that he might there fall in Battle, which took Effect, and the King was slain, though they had all assured him, in the Name of the Lord, that he should gain the Victory, and return in Peace. After the Death of *Ahab*, his two Sons *Ahaziah*

ziab and *Jeboram* reign'd, the one two and the other twelve Years. But in the twelfth Year of *Jeboram*, the Prophets conspired against him, as not being able to bear the Idolatry of that Family, and resolving to revenge the Blood of their Brethren, whom *Jezabel* had slain. The King, therefore, being under Care of the Wounds, which he had receiv'd in a Battle with the *Aramites* or *Syrians*, *Elisba*, who was now the chief Prophet and Professor at *Naioth*, dispatch'd one of his Order, to anoint *Jebu* one of the Captains; a Man of great Courage, and equal Ambition. The Prophet, according to his Instructions, call'd him aside out of a very large Company of Captains, and military Officers, and having taken him into a private Chamber, anointed him King, with a Commission to destroy all the House of *Abab*; and then opened the Door and fled. This was a very necessary Precaution; for had there been the least Notice before-hand, of such concerted Treason and Rebellion, the Prophet might not only have lost his own Life, but endangered the whole Order. But there needed no other Motive and Encouragement to a Man of *Jebu's* Fire and Ambition; and when he had told the Story to the rest of the Officers, what had happen'd between him and this *Madman*, as they call'd him, the whole Company immediately fell into the prophetic

prophetick Rage. They all mounted and proclaim'd *Jebu* King. Upon which the sick, wounded King, the Queen Mother, and all the House of *Abab*, with their Friends and Adherents, were most religiously murdered in the Name of the Lord.

Jebu having thus mounted the Throne, and cut off the whole *Abab* Family, goes on with the natural Violence and Impetuosity of his Temper, under a Pretence of Zeal for the Lord, and a Resolution to extirpate Idolatry by Fire and Sword; and having got all the Priests of *Baal* together, caused them to be put to Death without sparing one Man. After this he destroy'd all the Images and Places of Worship which had been set up to this *Zidonian* God. While he was about this Work, the Prophets applauded and extolled him to the Skies, and gave him a Lease of the Crown to the fourth Generation after himself, for his Zeal for the Lord of Hosts. But after all, *Jebu* disappointed these holy Men; for having exterminated the *Zidonian* Gods and Worship, which had been brought in by *Abab* and his Family, he restored the *Egyptian* Idolatry as in *Jeroboam's* Time, and thereby renew'd the Alliance with *Egypt*, after the *Syrians* had in a Manner depopulated and laid waste the Country. However, for the little Good that *Jebu* had done in destroying all the Priests of *Baal*, the Prophets made good their Word with this new idolatrous

latrous Family, and suffered them to enjoy the Crown for four successive Reigns, and during the Space of about a hundred Years. *Jeroboam* II. the last King but one of this Royal Family, by a long successful Reign of forty one Years, had intirely subdued the *Aramites*, cleared the Country of that formidable, outrageous Enemy, and retaken all the Cities and Towns which they had conquered from the Beginning of *Abab's* Reign. And yet this King was as great an Idolator, or Encourager and Supporter of Idolatry, as any that had been before him, and had restored the Observation of all the Sacrifices and Festivals of *Egypt*; which makes it evident, that the Toleration of Idolatry, had not been the real Cause of the Ruin and Devastation of this Country for above two hundred Years back. But, I take the Truth to be really this: About the Time that *Jeroboam* II. came to the Crown, the *Assyrians* began to grow very powerful, and had projected the Conquest of all *Asia*; and, therefore, the *Aramites*, or *Syrians* of *Damascus*, were now obliged to put a Stop to their Wars in *Palestine* and *Arabia*, in order to defend themselves at home; which gave *Jeroboam* an Opportunity to recover all that had been lost, and within four or five Years after the Death of this King of *Israel*, the *Assyrians* conquer'd these *Aramites*, took and destroyed *Damascus*, and removed the Seat of the Empire to *Nineveh*;

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after which, or about the same Time, they broke in upon *Israel*, and conquered the Country; and within fifty Years, their Empire being establish'd, they entirely destroy'd *Israel*, and led the ten Tribes captive. But *Jeroboam* dying, as I had observ'd, after a long successful Reign of forty one Years, his Son, *Zacharias*, succeeded him, who reign'd but six Months: For this whole Family having restored and supported the *Egyptian* Idolatry, and their Lease being now expired, it was high Time to bring about another Revolution. And therefore *Shallum* conspired against him, and smote him, and kill'd him in the Sight of all the People, to make good the Word of the Lord, and maintain the Credit of the Prophets. But this *Shallum* having committed Treason, in conspiring against and killing the King, and thereby saved the Credit of the Prophets, reign'd but one Month in *Samaria*; and then *Menabem* went up and smote *Shallum*, and slew him, and reign'd in his Stead. And because the City of *Tiphfaph* would not open to, and receive this new King, he smote and destroyed the Inhabitants, old and young, with all the Coasts thereof, so far as *Tirzah*, and ript up the Women with Child. In this King's Reign the *Assyrians* invaded and enslaved the Country, and within the Course of fifty Years put an End to these religious Wars, together with the regal Power and prophetick

Order in *Israel*, by leading away the whole Nation into Captivity, from which they never returned: And thus ended this religious Policy, with all the Credit and Influence of the Prophets for ever after. And tho' the Kingdom of *Judah* remained about one hundred and twenty Years longer, yet the few Prophets which afterwards arose among them met with no Quarter, and scarce any one of them died a natural Death. All this is sufficient to shew, that Religion and Conscience cannot be forced, and that the cruel Politicks and intemperate Zeal which attempted it, prov'd the Ruin of this antient and famous Nation.

During these intestine Wars, Outrages and Slaughter in *Israel*, on the Account of Religion, a most bloody War was carried on between the two divided Kingdoms on the same Account, or under the same Pretence, for the Space of about two hundred and sixty Years, or from the Revolt of the ten Tribes to the *Assyrian* Captivity, and total Extirpation and Destruction of *Israel*. The Pretence of *Judah* was Religion, and their Ground of declaring War, as they profess'd, was only to destroy Idolatry, by re-uniting the revolted Tribes to the House of *David*, a Prince who had never granted any Toleration in his Time, but rooted out Idolatry, and destroyed Idolaters by Fire and Sword, so far as he was able, in all the Nations round
about

about him. But besides this religious Pretext, the Men of *Judah*, or House of *David*, had certainly another Reason at Bottom, and perhaps a more prevailing one, for the merciless and outrageous Method, which they took with *Israel* after the Revolt; and that it was to recover their lost Sovereignty over the Nation, and to reduce them again to the same Vassalage and Yoke of Bondage, which they were under in *David* and *Solomon's* Time, while *Judah* sway'd the Sceptre. But the Men of *Israel* were sensible of this, and, therefore, resolv'd to maintain their Liberty, and never more to submit to the House of *David*, whatever might be the Consequence, and though it should prove their utter Extirpation and Dissolution, as in Fact it did. The Prophets finding that they had gain'd no Ground in their religious Politicks by dividing the Kingdom, but rather entail'd Idolatry upon the Nation, would fain have restored the Kingdom to the House of *David*; but this they were never able to effect. However, the Kingdom of *Judah*, to force the other Tribes to a Compliance, entered into an Alliance, first with the *Aramites* or *Syrians* of *Damascus*, and afterwards with the *Assyrians*, either to bring back the revolted Tribes, or utterly to root them out of the Land. But *Israel* remembred their former Vassalage under *Judah*, and of which they could obtain

no Promise of Redress at the Death of *Solomon*, and therefore chose any Fate rather than their old Oppression. But these Politicks in *Judab* and the Prophets soon brought about their own Destruction, and put an End to the regal Power and prophetick Office in *Judab*, as it had done in *Israel*. Their Friends and good Allies, the *Assyrians*, who had extirpated and led into Captivity their Brethren, by their Procurement, soon enslaved them, laid waste their Country, and made them Subjects and Tributaries; which Conquest the *Babylonians* afterwards completed and led them into Captivity after the other Tribes. And after this *Babylonish* Captivity, *Judab* could never recover the royal Power more, but remain'd subject to the *Babylonians*, *Persians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*, successively, to their last and final Dissolution and Extirpation, as a Nation or distinct People.

This short Account of the Matter is sufficient to shew, by what wrong Politicks in Religion, that unhappy Nation was reduc'd to such a Fate. And as the same Principles must always have the same Consequences, this Nation, I believe, have been set up by God and Providence, as an Example and Warning to all other Nations.

In all these religious Wars, Massacres, Outrages and Persecutions, which lasted from the breaking out of *David's* Rebellion
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lion to the *Assyrian* Captivity, for the Space of about three hundred and seventy Years, it is wonderful to observe, how little these anti-ent Prophets declaim'd against the Vices and Immoralities of the People; their open, profane Swearing, their execrable Curses and most abominable Lies, their Lufts and Whoredoms, their Dissimulation and Treachery, their Breach of the most solemn Oaths and Alliances, and their Cruelty, Outrage and Blood-thirstiness, contrary to all the Laws of Nature and Nations, and all which *David* himself had been most remarkable for, are scarce taken Notice of. But *David* is represented by these Prophets, as a Man after God's own Heart, and as having walked uprightly with the Lord, saving only in the Case of *Uriah* the *Hittite*. And in the mean while, nothing in a Manner is declared against but Idolatry, and the Necessity of Fire and Sword, as the most proper and only effectual Means of rooting it out. This was the Spirit of *David*, and the true religious Zeal for the Lord at that Time.

But after these Politicks had quite destroyed and exterminated one Part of the Kingdom, and enslav'd the other, whose Ruin was now imminent; it must be own'd that the few Prophets who were left, had bought Experience, and began to talk in another Strain: Not only abstaining from Idolatry,

but a true national Repentance, a strict Regard to the moral Law, and no Reliance upon Sacrifices and priestly Absolutions, was now found absolutely necessary to a national Restoration, if ever it could be effected at all. This was the Voice of all the Prophets that were left, or rose up after the *Assyrian* Captivity. But the Malady was now grown desperate, and when the People came to be told of the Necessity of true Repentance, Righteousness, and a strict Observance of the whole moral Law, they took no Notice of it. After the Captivities, indeed, they relinquish'd Idolatry, and could never bear the Sight of an Image more; but as to their moral Character, they grew, if possible, worse and worse. They had never been told before of any Thing but Idolatry, as the Cause of all their Miseries and Calamities hitherto, and which they had now quitted: And as they could not be charged with any Vices or moral Wickedness, which had not been approv'd of, and justify'd in *David*, their great Pattern and Exemplar, they now resolv'd to stick to their Sacrifices and priestly Absolutions in the legal Way. And this Method of Religion, or rather Superstition and Enthusiasm, they kept to as long as they remain'd a Nation. They rejected all the Calls and Exhortations of their later Prophets, to Repentance, and Obedience to the moral Law, and depended on Salvation
and

and Deliverance, from God's absolute Covenant Promises and Decrees, without any Regard to their own moral Conduct to fit and prepare them for these Promises, or looking on them as thus conditional.

With this Enthusiasm, Superstition, and predestinarian Presumption, great Numbers of this Nation, at first, adhered to Jesus, as their Messiah, or national Deliverer, tho' he could not prevail with them to bring forth any Fruits of Repentance, as a necessary Qualification for such a Deliverance; yet they would have taken him by Force to make him King, and set him up against the *Romans* as their Messiah, or the Restorer of the Kingdom: But when they found that he had no such ambitious Design, that he had renounced any such Pretensions to the very last, and declared that he came not with any such particular View to the *Jewish* Nation, they all deserted him at once, and cry'd out, Crucify, crucify him; though they had led him in Triumph through *Jerusalem*, and proclaimed him King but a Day or two before, as they had done all over the Country for a Twelve-Month together. This was the Reason of the Rabble for crucifying him, and a Resolution which they came to in a Moment, when they found that, contrary to their Expectations, he had declared against them upon his Trial before *Pilate*; though

had he declared for them, they would all have rose for him at once, and rescu'd him from the Priests and Rulers, as he tells *Pilate*, *John* xviii. 36.

But the High Priests and Rulers had another Reason for putting Jesus to Death; not because he had made himself the Messiah, or set up as the Restorer of the Kingdom; for they could prove nothing of this, tho' they pretended it: But their true Reason for cutting him off, was to prevent a national Rebellion, when they saw the Madness of the People, and that the Populace were resolv'd even to force him into their Measures, and set him up as King, whether he would or no. They dreaded the Consequence of such a general Insurrection, and in Case it should happen, as they had great Reason to fear, they could expect nothing but Destruction from the *Romans*. This is the Reason which *Caiaphas* the High Priest gave in Council, when they were debating upon it, and could find no Evidence against him, as making any Pretensions to the Messiah-ship; That it was better that one Man should die, tho' ever so innocent, than that the whole Nation should be destroy'd, which would be the Consequence of a Rebellion at that Time, which the People were all ripe for, and ready to rise in Arms for Jesus. This Advice being thought good, they acquiesced in it, and proceeded upon it, and tho'

tho' they could find no Proof, that Christ had made himself the Messiah, yet they presumed that the whole Body of the People could never have run into such a Notion, if some Encouragement had not been given. But herein, surely, the *Jewish* Mobility were mistaken; for Jesus had been so far from giving them any Encouragement to expect such a Revolution at that Time, or that he himself was the Person they took him for, that on the contrary, finding their Impenitency and incurable Wickedness, he had often pronounced the Destruction of their City and Temple, and their final Dissolution as a Nation; and which accordingly happened not many Years after. And this is a sufficient Proof, after the Experience of seventeen hundred Years, that this obstinate and superstitious Nation were then cast off for their Impenitency, and that Jesus was the last great Prophet that God intended to send them, and try them with, in order to their Repentance. And the Notion of the *Jews* at this Day, that the Promises and Prophecies relating to the Restoration of that Nation were absolute, that they could never be forfeited, and that they are still intitled to the Benefit, has not the least Ground or Foundation in their own Writings. Nothing has since happened to them, but what *Moses* himself had foretold. He knew from what he had seen and experienced of them, that

after his Death they would forsake God, forfeit all the Favour and Protection of his Providence, and be finally destroy'd and dissolv'd as a People; and he left it upon Record against them, and caused his last dying Words to be written and preserv'd in the Book of the Law. In the Days of Christ and the Apostles, the *Jews* who adhered to Jesus, as the Messiah, after his Resurrection, all expected that he would soon come again, with a sufficient Power from Heaven, to destroy the *Roman* Empire, to restore the Nation, and to set up his Kingdom at *Jerusalem*. And this was properly the *Jewish* Gospel, which Christ's own Disciples firmly adhered to, and preached. So that this Matter at first, with Regard to that Nation, was only a State Faction among the *Jews*; some of them receiving and adhering to Jesus as the Messiah, and others rejecting him under this Character, which was the main Body of the Nation.

I shall not here enquire how it came about at first, that so small and contemptible a Faction among the *Jews* should propagate this Notion so far and wide in the Christian Churches, and even among the *Gentile* Converts: But so it was; and yet I may venture to say, that none of our Christian *Jews*, at this Time, will ever be able to prove, that the Restoration of the Kingdom to *Israel*, and making *Jerusalem* the Seat of it, was not an essential

Character of the Messiah with all the Prophets, who said any Thing of the Matter: Nor will our modern *Judaizers* be able to prove, that our Saviour Jesus Christ ever made the least Claim or Pretensions to this prophetick *Jewish* Character, or that he pretended, in any peculiar Sense, to be the Saviour and Deliverer of the *Jews*. I have said thus much, to offer it to the farther Consideration of such learned Men among us, who may think that they are, or ever shall be, able to convince the *Jews* upon *Jewish* Principles. It is very plain, I think, that as many of the *Jews* in the Apostolick Age as embraced Christianity, continued as firm *Jews*, in Obedience to the whole Law afterwards, as they had been before. These *Judaizers*, or Christian *Jews*, received nothing new on their becoming Christians, but the single Article, that Jesus was the Messiah in the literal Sense of the Prophets, *i. e.* in their own national Sense. And it is evident, that St. *Paul* could not have preached and taught Christ among the *Gentiles*, as the Author and Founder of a new spiritual Kingdom, and as the common Saviour of the World, with any peculiar Regard to that Nation; he could not, I say, have done this, but by throwing off the literal Sense of the Prophets in this Case.

Theoph. I must own, that your historical Account of this whole Matter looks plausible.

You

You have almost persuaded me, that the *Jews* can never be convinced and converted to our Religion by *Moses* and the Prophets, and that even Christianity itself, upon such a Foot, would be but slightly grounded. But then, I doubt, the main Difficulty here will be to get fairly rid of such an Incumbrance, since it is plain, that Christ himself (as well as the Apostles afterward) frequently appeals to the antient Prophets of the *Jewish* Nation, for the Truth of his Doctrines and Mission from God, as the Person whom they had prophesied of and foretold; and if this Appeal should be set aside as weak or insufficient, the Consequence must be, that Jesus was what the *Jews* would make him, an Impostor and false Prophet. No doubt, *Philaletbes*, but you must see, that this is no trifling Objection; and, therefore, I hope you will not treat it as such.

Philal. The Objection, indeed, is of some Weight; and, I believe, it is the main Thing that has stuck with many learned Christians; who otherwise would not have been infinitely fond of *Moses* and the Prophets, as the Fathers and Founders of Christianity. But while I have *St. Paul* as my Expositor and Guide in this Case, I cannot think the Objection unanswerable: And, I had observ'd and prov'd before, that this great Apostle of the *Gentiles* understood *Moses* and the Prophets, as to all that relates to Christianity,

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in a figurative and allegorical, or mystical Sense, and rejected their literal, obvious, and plain Sense, as false, absurd, and contrary to the true Reason and Spirit of the Gospel. He argued with the *Jews ad Hominem*, and made the best Use he could of their own Principles and Concessions; as any wise and good Man would and must have done, under the same or like Circumstances. And, I take this Apostle to be a better Casuist and Expounder of the Doctrines of Christ, and of the true Nature, Genius, and Design of Christianity, than all the rest put together. It is true, that Jesus himself frequently appeals to *Moses* and the Prophets, as Witnesses of the Truth and Genuineness of his Doctrines, as coming from God; and consequently, that he could be no Impostor or Deceiver. And every Thing in *Moses* and the Prophets, relating to moral Truth and Righteousness, must be a Proof of this; and, therefore, so far he might fairly urge their Testimony. But he never once appeals to them, that he was the Person who was to restore the Kingdom to the House of *David*, or the Messiah in their national Sense, and in the plain, obvious Sense of all the Prophets who had said any Thing about it: So far from it, that he renounced this prophetick Character, and died upon that Renunciation. And if he had not done this, he need not have suffered as he did; nor could the *Jewish* Priests
and

and Rulers, nor even the *Romans* themselves, with all the Power they had then in the Country, have put him to Death; and *Pilate* was fully convinced of this, and therefore would have saved Jesus, had it been practicable. But the enraged Mob, thus disappointed, would have no Mercy.

Whether *Moses* and the Prophets understood Christianity, foresaw the Gospel Dispensation, and intended to introduce it, is at least doubtful, and may always be disputed. But not to insist on such Minuteneſſes, and even *Minutiæ Minutiarum*, let us try, if you please, the Strength of this Argument from Prophecy, upon the utmost Concession that can possibly be made. Let us then suppose, that the Prophets foresaw and foretold the Birth, Life, Miracles, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ, particularly and minutely in all the Circumstances of Time, Place, Persons, &c. as related by the Evangelists; or that we had receiv'd from the Prophets the same History precisely, as Events which were afterwards to happen: What could this have prov'd, but only that these Men had the certain Knowledge of Futurity in those Matters? And consequently, that these Events were necessary, as depending upon necessary Causes, which might be certainly foreknown and predicted? But this, I think, could not possibly have prov'd the Truth of any Doctrines, or the Righteousness of any Persons,

and

and therefore could have been no rational Foundation of true Religion. The Life and Religion of *Mahomet*, and the Pope, might have been foretold, as some think they were; and they might have been prophesy'd of by unrighteous Men, as *Balaam* was a true Prophet, tho', it seems, a wicked Man; for *Balaam* prophesy'd of the Conquest of *Palestine*, *Arabia* and *Syria*, by *David* the Star of *Jacob*, and of the Captivities and Destruction of the *Israelites* afterwards by the *Assyrians*, *Chaldeans*, *Greeks* and *Persians*. But, I cannot see how any of these, or other Prophecies, can be taken in Evidence for the Truth of Doctrines or Righteousness of Persons. All that Prophecy, taken in this Sense of Prediction, can do, is, to acquaint us with something future, that could not otherwise have been known: And here all Prophecy must terminate, and can go no farther. For the Prophets themselves, whatever they may know of Futurity, may yet be interested, designing, or vicious Men, and make very wrong Judgments of Persons and Things in their own Time. We have the Testimony of several of the antient *Jewish* Prophets, against many of their Brethren, the Prophets of that Time, that they often prophesy'd Lies in the Name of the Lord, sew'd Pillows under the People's Arms, buoy'd them up with vain Hopes, and cry'd, Peace, Peace, when there was no Peace. And these Prophets justify and extol

David's

David's Character, and set up his Example as worthy to be imitated by all future Princes; tho' he had been the most bloody Persecutor that ever had been known, and his whole Life had been one continued Scene of Diffimulation, Falshood, Lust and Cruelty. But his rooting out Idolatry, and destroying Idolaters by Fire and Sword, where-ever he came, made Atonement for all, and canoniz'd him as the great Saint and Idol both of the Prophets and Priests.

The Religion of those antient Priests before the Captivities, consisted only in an external Obedience to the Law, without regarding the Principle from which it proceeded, or whether it was free or forced. The Prophets, indeed, urged and insisted on such an Obedience to the moral as well as ceremonial Law; but the Priests only regarded the People's Conformity to the Law of Ceremonies, from which they derived all their Wealth and Power: And this has been always the Case of most other Priests to this Day. But Mortification, Self-denial, and a Faith which can support Men under Adversity and above the World, an inward Purity of the Heart and Affections, and the Practice of universal Benevolence and Charity, moral Truth, Righteousness, and Peace with all Men, from the Prospect of Immortality, and a future State of spiritual Happiness, to be enjoy'd with God and the Angels: This, I say, is a Religion which those holy
Men,

Men, the *Naioth* Prophets, never understood or taught. And how then they should have had any Notion of the Christian Dispensation, or think any Thing rightly about it, is hard to conceive. They had, indeed, a general Notion and Expectation, that God would sometime or other set up a better Oeconomy of Religion, under a clearer Light and more peaceful and righteous Administration; but as to what this Dispensation would be, upon what Principles it would be founded, or by what Means brought about, they knew nothing, and have told us nothing. Nay, they were mistaken in all their Guesſes and Conjectures about it; and what they ſaid of the Nature, Foundation and Method of introducing and eſtabliſhing this future Kingdom of Peace and Righteouſneſs, was perfectly wrong; for they all ſuppoſed, that it would be brought about by Conqueſt, or the Power of the Sword, and by a Prince of the Houſe or Lineage of *David*, who was to ſubdue all Nations, eſtabliſh his Kingdom in Peace at *Jeruſalem*, and bring the *Gentiles* into a peaceable Submiſſion and Obedience to this Government: In all which one may ſee a ſtrong national Prejudice, and a groſs Ignorance of the Nature of true Religion, and of that future, ſpiritual Dispensation, which God would introduce. Indeed, the State of Religion was ſo very bad and wretchedly corrupt among them, that it was natural to

hope for something better, as the Philosophers, and great Men among the Heathens, did. But they knew nothing in particular what it would consist in, or how it would be brought about.

Theoph. How far the prophetick Spirit, as we now understand it, for the supernatural Gift of Foreknowledge, may be urged as Evidence for the Truth of Doctrines, or the Righteousness of Persons, I shall not now dispute with you: As to this, I shall only say, *valeat quantum valere potest*. But then I do not yet see, that these antient Prophets were left quite so much in the Dark as to the Christian Dispensation, or that they were so grossly mistaken, as you seem to imagine, concerning the future Restoration of their Kingdom and Nation. Many of the Prophets, and the Nation in general, might possibly mistake in not distinguishing between the first and second Coming or Appearance of Christ, the Messiah, or Restorer of the Nation; and they might expect that Deliverance, at his first Appearance in the World, which was not to be effected, or brought about, till his second Coming. This, I am sure, was the Notion of all the primitive, orthodox Christians, for at least three hundred Years, as it is still the Opinion of many great and learned Men among our modern Divines, and at this very Time. And, if I am not greatly mistaken, the later *Jewish* Prophets

phets, who liv'd under the *Persian* Monarchy, plainly suppose and foretel this, that the Messiah was to die, or to be cut off, and then come from Heaven with an Host of Angels, to bring about such a Revolution. The Prophets, I here especially refer to, are *Daniel*, and *Esdras*. *Daniel*, in his Prophecy of the seventy Weeks, fixes the Time when the Messiah was to be cut off, *i. e.* in sixty two Weeks after the coming forth of the Commandment or Decree from the King of *Persia*, for the Restoration of the People. And this Decree came out at the very Time that *Daniel* was offering up his Supplications for such a Deliverance, as the Text expressly tells us. The Weeks here are annual Weeks, or annual Sabbatick Cycles, as all allow, that is, the sixty two Weeks are four hundred and thirty four Years. And, therefore, if this Decree came out in the seventh of *Artaxerxes* [*Mnemon*] and if Christ died in the thirty sixth Year of the vulgar Christian Æra, both which, I think, may be easily prov'd, this cutting off the Messiah will be just four hundred and thirty four Years after that Decree and Revelation to *Daniel*. But, if Christ died in the thirty third Year of the Christian Æra, this would be in the Middle of the last Week of the sixty two, which would do as well. I must own, that in this Computation, I suppose *Daniel* to have liv'd much later than is commonly supposed,

posed, and that the Book of *Daniel*, as we now have it, has been in this Case greatly corrupted and interpolated, as I think I could demonstrate, were this a proper Place and Time for it. Here then, according to my Chronology, *Daniel* prophesy'd of the Death of Christ, and was right as to the very Year, tho' the Event was not till four hundred and thirty-four Years after. And, according to this Computation, *Daniel's* seven Weeks, at the End of which the City and Temple was to be built, and the seventy Weeks in which the Nation was to be quite exterminated, and the daily Sacrifice to cease, will all fall in exactly with the Times at which they in Fact happened.

But, if you please to indulge me in a little farther Chat, before you interrupt me, I shall explain this Prophecy of *Daniel* somewhat more particularly, and then leave you to consider how far it may affect Christianity. I shall only, as I said here, suppose the Truth of my Chronology, which yet, I think, I am able effectually to support, as Occasion may be offer'd.

Philal. For my Part, I shall not dispute your Chronology at this Time, which Argument might lead us too much out of the Way, and take up more Time than we can now spare. You may, therefore, freely deliver the Matter in your own Sense, and leave me only to consider what Consequences you
would

would draw from it, or how far it may conduce to your main Purpose, as affecting Christianity.

Theoph. You are very good to exercise such Patience with me; but herein you will only pay a Value receiv'd.

I think, then, that *Daniel* the Prophet lived under the *Persian* Captivity in the Days of *Artaxerxes* II. or *Mnemon*. It is evident, that this Decree for the Restoration of the People came out at the very Time that *Daniel* was offering up his Prayers and Supplications, for the Liberty of his Nation. And *Daniel* being now either in *Judea*, or in some remote Province distant from the Court, an Angel was sent with the Intelligence, to acquaint him with the Decree or Commandment, which had been publish'd in their Favour, before any other Tidings could arrive. And this is a Demonstration, that where-ever the seventy Weeks end, they must begin at that very Time, when the Prophet was offering up his Supplications, as the Angel expressly declares, Chap ix. 20 --- 24. The modern *Jews*, in their false Chronology in this very Book, make this Decree to come out immediately after the Conquest of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Persians*, in the first of *Darius* the *Mede*, which was in the Year before Christ 538, as is very well known. And in this Account, the seventy annual Weeks, or four hundred and ninety Years,

would terminate forty eight Years before the vulgar Christian Æra; and, consequently, could not have related to Christ, or the Gospel Dispensation at all. And the same Objection, for the main, will hold good against any other Year, for the Time of *Daniel*, and the Publication of this Decree, when the four hundred and ninety Years shall terminate before the utter Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation, the Cessation of the daily Sacrifice, and the intire Dissolution of their State and Polity, by the *abominating* Desolations, or the Image of *Jupiter Olympius*, set up in the very Place where the Temple had stood, by the Emperor *Adrian*, about the Year of Christ 132. From this Time the *Jews* could never more consecrate the holy Ground, or carry on the daily Sacrifices, as they had always done before, while they were in Possession of the holy Ground, whether they had any Temple standing or not. From this Time, the daily Sacrifice among them ceased, and a most bloody War ensued, which lasted about three Years and a half, and ended in the vulgar Year 136, when the *Jews* were utterly exterminated and banished the Country by a Decree of *Adrian*, which made it Death for any *Jew* ever to return and settle there more. To this Period the Prophecy of *Daniel* must necessarily relate, if it be a true Prophecy, as I am apt to believe it is, and which I shall now prove upon my own Hypothesis. I

I suppose then *Daniel* to have lived not under the *Babylonian*, but the *Persian* Captivity: That he flourish'd under the Reign of *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, and that the Decree here mentioned was that of the seventh of his Reign, when *Ezra* the Scribe was sent up with a Commission to repair the City, restore the Observation of the Law, and reduce the People to their antient OEconomy and Government. This was the Year before Christ 398. From this coming forth of the Commandment or Decree, to the cutting off of the Messiah, or Death of Christ, was to be sixty two Weeks, or four hundred and thirty four Years. This terminates at the Beginning of the Year 36, when Jesus was crucify'd, according to the true Chronology, as I could easily prove had I here Time for it. In seven Weeks, or forty nine Years after this Decree, the Wall was to be built, and the new Temple dedicated to Messiah the Prince, who was to come in Person while that City and Temple were standing. This forty nine Years ended *Anno* 350, before Christ, when the *Persians* having recovered *Ægypt* after sixty three Years Revolt, restored the *Jews*, the main Body of whom had been held in Captivity there; and being now in the most imminent Danger of being conquer'd by the *Greeks*, favour'd the *Jews* as much as possible, to secure their Interest and Assistance in the War now dreaded from *Greece*. From

this Time the *Jews* in their own Country grew vastly numerous; whereas the whole Number of those who had returned from the Captivities, from the first of *Cyrus* to the twentieth of *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, did not exceed fifty thousand, including the whole Congregation, from twelve Years old and upward, Servants and all, according to *Nehemiah's* List. From this Time the seventy Weeks begin for the *Holy City* and People; for till now there was no City, and but very few People. And from hence the seventy Weeks, which were determined upon the whole City and People, to make an End of their Transgressions, to finish the Punishment of their Sins, and to conclude their whole OEconomy and Government; I say, these seventy Weeks terminate in the vulgar Year 140. And therefore, all this, the full and final Dissolution and Destruction of that State and Nation, happened, according to the Prophecy, in the Middle of the last Week of the seventy, or in the Year 136.

Philal. I must own, that allowing your Hypothesis, this Account comes nearer to the punctual and circumstantial Accomplishment of the Prophecy, than any other which I have seen. But then, you here ask such Postulata as must destroy the Credit of the History, and particularly with regard to the Time in which *Daniel* liv'd and prophesy'd. I am aware, that you might say many Things
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in Defence of your Chronology, and that it is generally allow'd, even by the most orthodox Writers, that the *Jewish* History, after the *Babylonish* Captivity, happened to be very much corrupted. I shall therefore leave others to dispute your Hypothesis with you, who have thought more of the Matter, and who are more learned, or more critical in this Way. In the mean while, it is enough for me to suppose you in the right, and that not only this, but every other Prophecy, have been exactly and circumstantially fulfill'd. I hope this Concession will be thought sufficient; and then, What Consequences would you draw from it?

Theoph. The only Consequence is this, that if you will not take clear, indisputable *Miracles*, and the evident circumstantial Accomplishment of *Prophecies*, as a Proof of *Revelation*, there can be no such Proof at all; and then we might as well give up the whole Affair, as the Effect only of *Imposture* or *Enthusiasm*.

Philal. Do you here mean by *Revelation* any rational, moral *Truth*, that must appear as such to the Mind or Understanding of Man, as soon as it comes to be fairly proposed under its proper Evidence? I beg you would consider a little what Answer to make, because I think the Question of very great Importance.

Theoph. I see what you aim at, and shall therefore endeavour to explain myself to you

as clearly and distinctly as I can. I have, then, always understood Truth to be of two different Natures or Kinds; namely, *natural* and *positive* Truth, or Truth in *Reason*, and Truth in *Fact*. There are many Things true, and of great Importance in Fact, which could not have been deduced by any Train of Reasoning from the natural Connexion, or necessary Consequences of Things. It is true, and a Truth of great Consequence to me, that I exist, that I am a Subject of moral Government, and that I must be happy or miserable in Futurity: But this is Truth which could be never known to you in the Way of abstract Reasoning, or without taking in the Facts upon which it must necessarily depend. And thus, whatever Benefits God might design to convey to the World by Jesus Christ, could never have been drawn from the natural Connexion and Consequences of Things, in the Way of abstract Reasoning, but must depend upon Testimony. And here I would beg of you to grant, that Miracles, and the Accomplishment of Prophecies, may be conveyed by historical Evidence, so as to produce a rational, solid Ground of Belief.

Philal. You need not have begg'd what I had granted before. But the only Question here is, What Proof Miracles and Prophecies can give us of *moral Truth*, or of the Truth of any Doctrines as coming from God,

God, and as necessary to our Salvation? We may be informed by human Testimony, and good historical Evidence, of very important Facts, no doubt, and Facts which we could not otherwise have known: But what certain Mark or Criterion have we to distinguish *human Testimony* from *divine Authority*, or how can we prove from human Testimony, that any Doctrine comes from God, as a Matter of Conscience and eternal Salvation? It would not, as I conceive, justify me in receiving any Doctrine as from God, and resting my eternal Salvation upon it, that Miracles had been wrought for the Proof of it in former Ages, or that such and such Things had happened correspondent to the most antient Prophecies concerning them. There will be always two very strong Objections against such an Argument as this, when apply'd to Religion. First, That it would be a hard Matter to prove the Thing as unexceptionably true in Fact, or that the first Report and Belief of it did not arise from Ignorance, Presumption, Prejudice, &c. And, in the next Place, that no Consequence can be drawn from any such Thing, supposing it ever so true and clearly prov'd in Fact. For this, I think, is certain, that the Being and moral Perfections of God, and the natural Relations of Man to him, as his reasonable Creature, and the Subject of his moral Government, cannot depend upon the
Truth

Truth or Falshood of any historical Facts, or upon our forming a right or wrong Judgment concerning them: For this would depend upon so many uncertain Circumstances and Possibilities of Error, that God, in this Case, must be supposed to have placed the Salvation of Mankind upon a very precarious and sandy Foundation. Besides, I have prov'd already, that the Characteristick of moral Truth and Righteousness, is the only sure Mark or Criterion of any Doctrine or Practice, as coming from God, and divinely authoriz'd; and that we cannot quit this, or trust to any Thing else, without exposing ourselves to all the Imposture and Enthufiasm in the World.

Theoph. You are resolv'd, it seems, to make thorough Work with positive Laws and external Rituals, or Things indifferent in Matters of Religion. But then, I should still be glad to know what Christianity you would retain, or how you would distinguish it from the Religion of Nature?

Philal. And I, in Return, should be glad to know, when you have thrown out the Religion of Nature, what Christianity you would have left, or what Christianity or the Gospel Revelation is, as distinguish'd from natural Religion, or the Obligations of moral Truth and Righteousness? I do not intend by this, to oppose Revelation to Reason, or to set up the Religion of Nature in Opposition

sition to Christianity as such; but pray resolve me wherein they are distinguishable, and what are your most peculiar Doctrines of Revelation, when the eternal, immutable Doctrines and Principles of moral Truth and Reason are set aside, and left out of the Account? I do not here expect, that you should throw out the Doctrines and Principles of moral, immutable Truth and Righteousness; but only to set them aside so far as not belonging to the Account, when you are considering the simple, pure Revelation itself. This is all that I aim at, and which you must, I hope, look upon as a very reasonable Demand.

Theoph. I must own, that I am not very ready to answer your Questions. I know there are several Doctrines which have been generally received as reveal'd Truths; but which you would presently reject, not only as irrational, but unscriptural too. Such as the commonly receiv'd Doctrines of the Trinity, hypostatick Union, Satisfaction, imputed Righteousness, absolute Decrees, indefectible, irresistible Grace, &c. In short, you have almost robb'd us of Revelation, and now you have taken it all away, you want to know where or what it is.

Philal. You seem to give up several Points in a Jest, which others would make a serious Matter of. But do you not still maintain Church Power, priestly Absolutions, the
spiritual

spiritual Regeneration of Baptism, and the seal'd Pardons of the other Sacrament from authoriz'd Hands?

Theoph. I have no great Mind, at present, to answer any of your Questions: But I have several other Questions to ask you, and hope you will not insist now upon *quid* for *quo*. You must here, therefore, give me Leave to catechize you a little, not so much for Argument Sake, as my own Information. And I must ask you, in the first Place, Whether the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, and a future, eternal State of Happiness or Misery, was not a peculiar Principle of the Christian Revelation; and whether this was not strictly and properly the *Life and Immortality brought to light by the Gospel?*

Philal. This Doctrine, as Christ himself and the Apostles preach'd it, was believ'd before by all the Pharisees, who were then the main Body of the Nation. It had been received and believed among the *Jews*, by that Sect of the Pharisees from the Days of the Prophet *Esdra*s, who was cotemporary with *Zoroaster*. *Zoroaster* himself had profess'd and taught it among the *Persians* four hundred Years before. And the *Persian* Magoi had receiv'd and taught the same Doctrines of the Unity of God, a Resurrection from the Dead, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, for many hundred
Years

Years before *Zoroaster*, who did not, in these Cases, pretend to introduce any new Religion, but to restore the true, old, *Abrahamick* Religion, which had been in some Respects corrupted. All this, I think, *Dr. Hyde*, in his Book *de Religione veterum Persarum*, makes very clear. This, therefore, could be nothing new among the *Jews* in *Christ's* Time, since the greater Part of the Nation had receiv'd it long before. And it may be observ'd, that our Saviour never blames the Scribes and Pharisees for not believing, professing, and teaching these Doctrines, but for not practising them; which has been the Case of all Scribes and Pharisees ever since, and always will be so.

Theoph. But surely there was something peculiar in that Dispensation; something then preach'd as necessary to Salvation and eternal Life, which had never been advanced or taught before. What was this?

Philal. It was Salvation and eternal Life only in and by *Jesus*, as *Christ*, the *Messiah*, Saviour, and Deliverer of the *Jews*, or the Restorer of the Kingdom to *Israel*, and to the House of *David*: Besides whom, as the *Jewish* *Messiah*, there was no other Name given under Heaven by which Men could be saved.

Theoph. But did *Jesus* himself own or take upon him this Character, as the *Jewish* *Messiah*, or the Restorer of the Kingdom

dom to *Israel*, in their national and well-known Sense?

Philal. No: He renounced it to the last, and died upon that Renunciation, by declaring before *Pilate*, that *his Kingdom was not of this World*, and that he had no such worldly, ambitious Views, as the Priests and Rulers charged him with, and put him to Death for, nor could they prove any such Thing against him; and therefore *Pilate*, upon Examination, would have acquitted him, had it not been for the Violence and Outrage of the Populace, who could not be satisfy'd but by his Crucifixion.

Theoph. But how came the People to be thus intraged at him all at once, when they had follow'd and favour'd him all along, led him in Triumph thro' *Jerusalem*, and proclaimed him Messiah but a few Days before; who had so well guarded him in and about *Jerusalem*, that the Priests and Rulers dared not lay Hands on him, for Fear of the People, and could not have done it the Night before, but secretly and by Craft?

Philal. This is a very proper Question, and will let you into the Secret of the whole Affair. It is plain, that the *Jewish* Populace or Mobility had generally a Notion of him, as their Messiah, national Deliverer, or Restorer of the Kingdom. Upon this Supposition only they had follow'd and adher'd to him for a Twelve-Month together, and
were

were all ready, at this Time, to take up Arms for him, and make him King even by Force. They had Expectations and strong Hopes, that he would declare for them to the very last. But when they found that he disclaimed it before *Pilate*, and quitted their Interest upon his Trial, they were all turned in a Moment, and, as one Man, cry'd out, *Crucify, crucify him, it is not fit that such a Fellow should live, away with him from the Earth.*

Theoph. This might be a sufficient Reason, why the Populace should turn against him all at once: But what made the High Priests and Rulers so violently against him from first to last? For they fought all along to seize and put him to Death, while the People stood strenuously by him, and guarded and protected him.

Pbilal. The Priests and Rulers were still afraid of the People on one Hand, and of the *Romans* on the other. They thought if they should seize Jesus the Populace would stone them; and if the People should set him up as King, it must bring on a War with the *Romans*, to the Destruction of the Nation. They could not prove that he had made any Pretensions to the Crown against *Cæsar*, and yet they presumed he must have given the People some Encouragement in that Way; or else so strong and general an Expectation could never have been raised and kept up;

up; or at least had he renounced any such Pretensions sooner, as he did at last, the People would all have forsook him, as they did, as soon as they had found he was not for their Turn, that he was not the Man they aim'd at, and that he had, as they thought, betray'd them. That this was the Principle which the Priests and Rulers acted upon, is very plain; for when they came to debate it in Council, whether they should apprehend and cut him off, and found they could have no plain direct Proof of his declaring for the Messiahship, some of them were for letting him go: But *Caiaphas*, who was then the acting High Priest, stood up, and told them, that in his Opinion, they had all mistaken the Matter; for the Question was not whether the Person charged was guilty or not, but whether it would be safe to let him alone. For since the whole Populace of the Country were ready to take up Arms for him, and declare him as King, if this should happen, as seem'd likely, it must bring on a War with the *Romans*, to their utter Destruction: And, therefore, to prevent the worst, it would be better that one Man, however innocent, should suffer, than that the whole Nation should perish. This Advice was taken, and put in Execution; and the Consequence of it, or how it succeeded, is very well known. This grand Event, therefore, in the Death of so
glorious

glorious a Martyr and Confessor to the Truth, was not so much owing to the Malice of the Priests and Rulers, as to the Necessity of Affairs, and the Madness and Superstition of the common People; they who had declared him their Messiah, or King, for a Twelve-month together all over the Country, and who had led him in Triumph through *Jerusalem*, and proclaim'd him King but two or three Days before; when they found now that he had renounced that Character upon his Trial, and satisfied *Pilate* that he had no Designs against *Cæsar*, or any Views at a temporal Kingdom, the Populace all turned against him at once, and the whole Nation then present, from all Parts, at the Feast, join'd in the Cry, Crucify, crucify him. It was not now in the Power of *Pilate* to have sav'd him, even though the Priests and Rulers should have join'd with him in it. He fell a Victim to popular Superstition, Rage and Phrenzy; and the same Cause must have had the same Effect any where else, or at any other Time. Had he then declared for the Messiahship or Kingdom, as that People expected, they would all have armed in his Defence, and it would not have been in the Power of the Governor, or any Power then in the Nation, to have put him to Death. That the *Jewish* Populace in general had such an Expectation from him, is evident, beyond all Contradiction.

tion. Nay, his own Disciples had all along adhered to him upon this vain Hope, and even after his Resurrection, they never preached Jesus as the Messiah or Christ in any other Sense. No Christian *Jew* ever believ'd in Jesus as the common Saviour of the World, without Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*. This was St. *Paul's* Gospel, which he had received, as he declared, by immediate Revelation from Christ himself; and had never advised or consulted with any of the *Jewish* Apostles about it, as well knowing that they would never come into it.

Theoph. Christianity then, as you represent it, was nothing else but a political Faction among the *Jews*; some of them receiving Jesus as the Messiah or Restorer of the Kingdom, and others rejecting him under that Character.

Philal. I take this to be the plain Truth of the Matter; for they who received him as the Messiah, were as zealous for the Law, and as great Sticklers for it, as the rest who rejected him.

Theoph. Instead of ending this Debate, we seem to be just beginning it. What, I beseech you, did the Apostles of Christ preach two different Gospels? Did *Peter*, *James* and *John* preach one Gospel, and *Paul* another? You seem to plead the Cause of Infidelity and Scepticism so well, that one would think
you

you were hired to it, or had some great Interest and Concern in it.

Philal. I plead the Cause of God and true Religion as well as I can; and therefore, by *Infidelity* here, I hope you do not mean *Atheism*, *Immorality*, or *Irreligion* of any Sort. And as for *Scepticism*, it is a Word of *Greek* Derivation, and of such doubtful Construction as we use it, that I know not what you mean by it, and much question whether you know yourself. I know it is used as a modern Term of Reproach, like *Atheist*, *Deist*, *Heretick*, *Schismatick*, and many other such important Shibboleths and Party Terms: But a Sceptick, in the natural and only just Sense of the Word, signifies an Enquirer or Searcher after Truth, one who will believe no more than he can see Reason for, and who will take the Liberty to reject any Opinions whatever, how sacred soever they may have been thought, or how generally soever receiv'd, upon the most current Authorities, till, upon a free, impartial Enquiry, they appear reasonable or probable to his own Understanding. And this is certainly the greatest and best moral Character in the World, and without it a Man can neither be wise nor honest. It is really wonderful to me, *Theophanes*, that the very Men who talk most against Scepticism, and endeavour to cry it down as *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, yet pretend, at the same Time, to be

the greatest *Scepticks* in the World, or the freest and most impartial *Enquirers*. With these Men Scepticism, Infidelity, Atheism, and all such Terms of Infamy and Reproach, signify nothing else but being of a *different Opinion*, or not submitting one's self to their Infallibility, or rather to the Infallibility of their Party, while they have no Judgment or Opinion of their own. But this Infallibility lies in the most invincible Prejudice and incurable Wrong-headedness. Such a Man's Passions may govern him, and run away with his Understanding, till he is so far out of Sight, or any discriminating Notices of Truth, that he will venture his eternal Salvation upon it, that he sees plainly what he does not and cannot possibly see, and of which he had never any one Thought or consistent Idea in his Life. Men may talk, *Theophanes*, without thinking; and you may easily perceive, that our greatest Talkers, and most positive Deciders, never think at all.

Indubitable Faith, and *Certainty of Persuasion*, the *Infallibility of Story*, the indisputable Orthodoxy of a Majority, join'd with the popular, passionate Outcry against Deists, Infidels, Scepticks, Free-thinkers, &c. are the sure Signs, either of a very bad Cause, or a very weak Defence of a good one. Men never take this Method till Reason has forsaken them, and then their loudest and bitterest

bitterest Complaints are against Reason itself. No doubt, but many large, elaborate Volumes will be written, and a thousand Sermons preach'd against a little Book of mine, if this Dialogue should ever happen to be publish'd; in which my Adversaries, especially the *Judaizing* Part of the Clergy, will clearly and triumphantly confute all that I have said, without answering any one Objection. But when I have try'd your Strength upon the Argument, I shall not be in much Pain about any after Reckonings, but patiently submit to whatever, without Proof, they may please to call me.

Theoph. I must own, that your Attempt, or at least visible Aim, to set the Apostles, Prophets and Teachers in the Apostolick Age together by the Ears, under a Notion or Pretence that some of them were *Jews* and others *Christians*, shock'd me a little: But the Reason of this, may be, that I have never hitherto, and cannot yet enter into your Way of thinking. But I do not know, that I have any Prejudice to Truth, or at least, I am sure, that I have no such wilful and indulged Prejudice. And, I must tell you, Sir, that your Compliment of trying the Strength of the Argument with me, is very ill-timed and placed; for, as I did not expect any such Attack on this Side, I was not well prepared for it, or armed against it. How-

you ought not to give yourself any Airs upon it, especially with Regard to our *learned Clergy*, whom you may please to call *Judaizers*, and among whom I doubt not but you will meet with Men enough, sufficiently able to cope with you, and who will give you a very different Opinion, both of their Strength and Impartiality, from what you seem to have at present.

Philal. I should rejoice to see such Adversaries among the hierarchical Men, or *Judaizing* Part of the Clergy; and if God will spare my Life till he has raised them up, I should desire, in this World, no greater Blessing. But, before these Gentlemen are up in Arms, it may not be amiss to cut them out a little more Work, lest they should rise for nothing.

Theoph. But, with Submission, before you cut out more Work for others, I must beg Leave to cut out a little more for you. You own then, that the Christian Religion, when rightly understood, is the true Religion; that Jesus Christ was the greatest Prophet that ever appear'd in the World; that he has promulged and declared the Will of God more fully and clearly than any other; and that consequently you adhere to him in Opposition to, or Contradistinction from any other Prophet, Reformer, Lawgiver, or Promulger of the Will of God to Mankind. I think, *Philaletbes*, I do not misapprehend you so far

as this; or if I do, I am ready to stand corrected.

Philal. You are perfectly right, *Theophanes*; and I should think myself happy, if upon these Terms you would allow me to be a Christian: But if you think I cannot be a Christian without being a *Jew*, or receiving the *Jewish* Canon as the Rule of Christian Faith, I believe we shall never come together, or go to Heaven in the same Way. I am a Christian upon the Foot of the *New Testament*, and I have talk'd with you a little already about the *Jewish* Proofs of Christianity, and what Sort of Christians they were. It is certain, I think, that all their Proofs failed them, though some of them stuck to him upon a Principle which he had never espoused, but always disclaimed. It will be impossible for the Christians ever to convince the *Jews* upon *Jewish* Principles. *St. Paul*, the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, could never convince one of them upon those Principles. That great Apostle saw, that it was impossible to unite two different and opposite Schemes of Religion; or, which is the same Thing, to reconcile true Religion, and Liberty of Conscience, with Enthusiasm, Persecution and Superstition. The *Jewish* State, or the Religion of *Moses*, had been founded in the Principles of Persecution, in which Idolatry was to be exterminated, and Idolaters destroyed by Fire and Sword. Under this

Constitution, indeed, there was Room left for all Nations to be *profelyted* or *naturalized*, without being circumcised, or submitting to the ceremonial Law. But then, they were absolutely to separate themselves from all Idolaters, or People of other Religions; and this Separation was to regard all Family Intercourse of eating and drinking together, Cohabitation, Intermarriages, Alliances in War, or any other Conjunction of Interest, though it should appear ever so necessary for mutual Defence and Self-Preservation. And these Profelytes, or naturalized Foreigners, upon this Contract and Coalition were obliged to assist the State, in case of Need, with all their Forces, to destroy Idolaters whenever they came into the Country, or sprang up there, though as Friends, and desiring a Conjunction of Interests for a common Safety. This strict and rigid Separation from all the rest of the World, and abjuring their Friendship or Alliances as Idolaters, is so closely interwoven with all the Laws of *Moses*, that it may be call'd the fundamental Constitution of that State or Body politic. This *Jewish* Lawgiver thought that it would be impossible to keep Idolatry and false Religion out of the Society, but by punishing it with Death; and that true Religion might be promoted and secured by Force. And this was the Genius and Complexion of the whole Nation, from first to last;

last; and no *Jew*, or Disciple of *Moses*, ever believ'd, that true Religion could be supported and maintained, without an external Jurisdiction, and temporal Power over Conscience.

When the Gospel came to be preach'd to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they gave it a very different Reception. The *Jews* could receive nothing contrary to their old Superstition and national, *Egyptian* Prejudices. And, therefore, when *St. Paul* came to preach Christ as the common Saviour of the World, there was not one *Jew* that could ever give into his Scheme. They would have allowed the *Gentiles* the Privileges of Christ's Kingdom, so far as they would be profelyted or naturalized, and thereby enter into their national Inclosure and Separation from the rest of the World: But beyond this they could never be brought, by any Argument or Reason, to move a Step. And, therefore, *Peter*, who had the Keys, shut the Gates of the Kingdom against the whole *Gentile* World, who would not submit to the Law of Profelytism, or *Jewish* Naturalization. This Point was carried in the first Council at *Jerusalem* by all the *Jewish* Apostles, Elders, and Brethren then present; and that this was against all *St. Paul's* Remonstrances, and earnest Endeavours to the contrary, is very plain.

This Apostle had been preaching Christ, as a common Saviour, to the *Gentiles*, without
any

any Regard to the Law for now above fourteen Years, I think seventeen. A great Noise having been now made at *Jerusalem*, about *Paul's* receiving the Heathen *Gentiles* at *Antioch* without Profelytism, was the true Occasion of appealing to the Council, as the History abundantly proves. Upon this great Occasion, and Perplexity of Affairs, *St. Paul* went up to *Jerusalem*, not only as a Deputy from the Church with others, but by a particular Revelation to himself, by which he was commissioned to go. He went up some Time before the Sitting of the Council, and communed privately with *James*, *Peter* and *John*. In this Conference he told them plainly the Gospel, which he had been for many Years preaching to the *Gentiles*, before he came so near to *Jerusalem* as *Antioch*. No doubt, but the Apostle here press'd as earnestly as possible for an Exemption for the Heathen Converts from the Laws of Profelytism, since upon this Foot he could not pursue his Design, or propagate Christianity among the *Gentiles*.

These three leading Men, among the Christian *Jews*, then seem'd satisfy'd with *St. Paul's* Account of the Matter; gave him the Right Hand of Fellowship, as the Apostle of the *Gentiles*; confirmed his divine Mission which he had received by Revelation, and promised not to disturb or molest him in that Ministry. But when it came to the
 Trial,

Trial, they could not carry the Matter so far in the Council; for after much Disputing, and the warmest Debates, it was resolv'd upon, that these legal Qualifications should bind all the *Gentiles* without Exception. And in Consequence, as I observ'd, they shut the Gates of the Kingdom against all *Gentiles* who would not be profelyted or naturalized.

St. *Paul* not having been able to carry his Point in the Council, was forced afterwards to go on in his own Way, and to declare against their Authority. Upon the Rising of the Council, *Peter* went down with *Paul* to *Antioch*, and there lived for some Time eating and drinking with the *Gentile* Converts, in the new hospitable Way, or just as Mankind, however differing in Religion, ought to treat one another. But it was not long before certain Brethren, *Judaizing* Zealots, went down from *James* to break off this Alliance between *Peter* and *Paul*, and to demand a Submission to the Council. This frighted *Peter* out of his new Alliance, and from henceforth he separated from the *Gentile* Converts, and would never eat or drink, or maintain any Family Intercourse with them more. St. *Paul* could not but be highly provok'd at this Fickleness and Irresolution of *Peter*, and hereupon he withstood him to the *Face*, i. e. they had a warm Debate before the whole Church. But *Peter* not being able to bear St. *Paul*'s Reproofs,
nor

nor answer his Arguments, separated from him, and drew off *Barnabas*, who was carried away with the *Dissimulation of those of the Circumcision*. *St. Paul*, in the two first Chapters of his Epistle to the *Galatians*, mentions *Peter* five or six Times, to let them see that he was the principal Person aim'd at, as the Head and Ring-Leader of the *Judaizers*, who would still keep up the Separation between *Jews* and *Gentiles* in the Christian Churches, or Kingdom of Christ.

But these *Judaizers*, or Christian *Jews*, did not stop here; but soon fell into gross Idolatry, and set up a great Number of Mediators and Intercessors with God, instead of one. We have, indeed, no distinct, plain Account of this in profane Story, as we have very little of that Kind before the End of the third, or Beginning of the fourth Centuries. But it is confess'd, on all Hands, that the *Apocalypse* was writ long before, and is a Book of the Apostolick Age. I think, *Sir Isaac Newton* has proved it to be a genuine Work of *St. John's*, and that it was written in *Nero's* Time, two or three Years before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. And, however dark and obscure the prophetick Parts of this Book may be, yet the Doctrinals contained in it are very clear, and cannot easily be mistaken. And from this Book, I think, it appears plainly, that the Christian *Jews*, so early as this, had establish'd

lish'd the *Mediation of Angels*, the *Invocations of Saints at their Tombs*, and Prayers for the Dead. They prophesied the sudden Down-fall of the *Roman Empire*, and the near Approach of a fifth Monarchy, by the Coming of Christ, with a sufficient Power from Heaven to set up his temporal Kingdom at *Jerusalem*, when all Enemies were to be destroy'd by Fire and Sword, and the Government of the Earth given to these militant Saints. And that these are the plain Doctrinals of the Book, might be easily prov'd. It was then, it seems, a current Doctrine among the Christian *Jews*, and here plainly established, that the ministring Angels were Mediators between God and us, and that they offer'd up our Prayers at the Throne of God, and recommended our Services to the divine Acceptance, as the Priests at the Altar did under the Law. Thus the twenty four Elders, or principal Angels which stood before the Throne, are represented as having Gold Censers in their Hands full of Incense, which is the Prayers of the Saints. They pretended to know the different Orders of Angels, and could call upon them, at least the principal of them, by Name; and therefore 'tis no Wonder that the mediatorial Worship of Angels was so common among them. This Worship of Angels, indeed, was then only mediatorial and not immediate and direct, and therefore the
Angel

Angel refused St. *John's* immediate direct Adoration, when he was going to pay it to him. But if the Angels are our Mediators and Intercessors with God and the Lamb, as this Book plainly supposes, there is all the Reason in the World, that we should address them in their mediatorial Capacity, subordinate to Christ. And the same Reason will hold good for the Invocation of Saints. St. *John* saw under the Altar the Souls of them which had been slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they had born, crying out continually, *How long, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our Blood on them that dwell upon the Earth!* Chapter vi. ver. 8, 9. And if the departed Saints and Martyrs are still in such a State of earnest Desire, Hope and Expectation of a full complete Deliverance, we ought surely to pray for them as they do for us, and even pray to them, or request their Prayers and Intercessions with God for us, whenever we apprehend them present. And this, no doubt, was the Foundation of that most antient Practice of the Christians, especially the *Judaizers*, of meeting together, and performing their religious Worship and divine Services in their Cemeteries or Burying-Places. They had a Notion, that the Souls of their deceased Saints and Martyrs, not being in a full State of Happiness, remain'd hovering about their Tombs and Sepulchres
till

till the Resurrection; where being present, they could hear the Prayers, and be Witnesses to the Devotions of the Living.

This Notion being once receiv'd and establish'd, it was easy and natural to run out of one Degree of Superstition into another; from praying for the Dead, they soon came to pray to them; and from praying to them, as their Intercessors with God and the Lamb, in a subordinate, mediatorial Capacity, they proceeded to invoke them directly. And this Practice prevail'd throughout all *Christendom* before the End of the fourth Century, as I could abundantly demonstrate, was this a proper Place for it.

But the great and dangerous Part of the Scheme, with regard to those primitive Christian *Jews*, was, that they confin'd Salvation to themselves. They believ'd in Christ only as their national Restorer and Deliverer, or as the Hope and Salvation of *Israel*; and they excluded the whole *Gentile* World from all the Benefits of the Kingdom, but on the Condition of their being circumcis'd, or at least being naturaliz'd by Profelytisin. No Christian *Jew* ever believ'd in, or preach'd Christ as the common Saviour of the World, of both *Jew* and *Gentile*, by a new Law of his own, independent of the Law of *Moses*. They always took the fifth Monarchy, or Kingdom of the Messiah, to be a temporal Kingdom, which was immediately to succeed
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the Destruction of the *Roman, Latin,* or Western Empire seated at *Rome*. And they founded this Kingdom in Blood and temporal Destruction, as the four Monarchies before had been successively founded. And they believ'd, that a new *Jerusalem* would be the Metropolis of this Empire, a City to be built without Hands, and coming down from Heaven, twelve thousand Furlongs square, or fifteen hundred Miles; and that all the *Gentiles* would be forced to bring in their Riches and Treasures, as Contributions, and Marks of Homage, to their *Jewish* Messiah, whose Reign was to be a thousand Years. *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob, Moses* and the Prophets, and all the believing holy *Jews* in every Age or Country, were to be raised from the Dead to possess this Kingdom, and to glut their Revenge upon the *Gentile, unbelieving* World. This was the *Jewish* Gospel; and this is the plain and evident Doctrine of the Apocalypse. And whoever does not believe all this, must be damn'd, and the deepest Curse, or Anathema, is denounced at the Close against that Man, who should add to, or diminish from the Words of this Book; as, that God shall add to him all the Plagues and Curses written therein, and strike his Name out of the Book of Life.

Theoph. I have heard you with Patience hitherto; but now you are running beyond
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all the Boundaries of Truth and Reason. Instead of fixing and explaining Christianity, as I hoped you would have done, you are endeavouring to perplex and darken it, by resting the Cause upon an abstruse, unintelligible Book. But I hope we may be Christians, without understanding the *Revelations*.

Philal. You cannot be a *Christian Jew* without understanding the *Jewish Christianity*. And this Book is, in *that Sense*, the Christian Revelation, or the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which is the very Title of the Book; but no other Book of the *New Testament* assumes or claims any such Character. The Gospels and Epistles contain either historical Accounts of Facts, or practical Rules, Exhortations and Directions grounded upon those Facts, as well as the Nature and Reason of Things. And, therefore, if you reject this Book, as the true and proper Christian Revelation, or Revelation of Jesus Christ, which had been receiv'd and own'd as such in all the primitive Ages, by every Christian *Jew*; I would fain know what you mean by the *Christian Revelation*, as distinct from the Religion of Nature, reviv'd?

Theoph. I take the Apocalypse to contain a true Prophecy of the State of Mankind, and all the great Revolutions of the World, from the Time when it was written, to the Consummation of all Things: But I cannot pretend to enter into all the prophetick Cha-

acters of the Book, as if I could understand the Times, Seasons, and particular Events, as well as the Prophet himself. And besides, perhaps the Prophecies were only intended to be explain'd by the Event, and not to make us Prophets, or to let us into the Secrets of Heaven. But when Prophecies come to be fulfill'd, the Event will plainly prove their Accomplishment, and this will sufficiently demonstrate that the Things were fore-seen; and, consequently, that the World is governed by a wise, intelligent, and overruling Providence. And this, perhaps, may be the principal Design and Use of Prophecy.

Philal. I am not now talking to you about the Prophecies, but Doctrines of this Book; not of what is not reveal'd, but of what is reveal'd and plainly declar'd in it. As to the prophetic Parts of the Book, it is plain that the Author look'd upon all the Events there represented to him, as very near at Hand, and just ready to be accomplished. It is a *Revelation of Things which were shortly to come to pass*. When *Daniel* had the same Revelation about the fifth Monarchy, or the Kingdom of the *Jewish* Messiah, he was order'd to seal the Book, or to keep it apocryphal, because the Time was long. And accordingly this Book was never publish'd till about the Time of the *Maccabees*, when the *Jews* expected their final and general

neral Restoration; but when the same Prophecy of the fifth Monarchy was given to *John*, he was not to seal, but immediately to promulge the Book, and send it to the Churches, because the *Time was at Hand*. But the Event has since prov'd that the Time was long, even in St. *John's* Days, and not so near at Hand as he presumed. The fifth Monarchy, according to him, was immediately or very soon to succeed the fourth, as the first four had succeeded one another. But *Rome*, or the *Roman* Western Empire, which was then prophesied against, has now ceased for twelve hundred and sixty Years, and yet no such universal Empire of Peace and Righteousness, under a *Jewish*, national Messiah, has yet appear'd.

I know not what Right Mr. *Whiston* had to place an Interval of twelve hundred and sixty Years between the Destruction of the fourth, and the Rise of the fifth Monarchy; nor from what Right or Reason he and others have taken a Day for a Year, in the Interpretation of those Prophecies. I am satisfi'd there is no Foundation for it in Scripture; and that Days and Years, as there us'd, always signifies natural Days and Years, and nothing else. The *Jews* had no such Computation as putting a Day for a Year, tho' they had annual Weeks. And therefore when Weeks are mentioned, as in the famous Prophecy of *Daniel*, it may signify

Weeks of Years, as well as Weeks of Days. When God told *Ezekiel* that he had given him a Day for a Year, and that as the Temple had then stood three hundred and ninety Years from the Revolt of the ten Tribes, so it should be taken and spoil'd in three hundred and ninety Days from that Time; this had no Relation to the modern pretended, prophetick Character, in putting a Day for a Year; for here Years signify Years, and Days Days, and nothing else: But, as I said before, I am not now disputing with you about Prophecies, but Doctrinals, and whether the plain doctrinal Part of the Apocalypse can be defended.

Besides what I have observed before concerning the mediatorial Worship of Saints and Angels, and Prayers for the Dead, all which are plainly founded in this Book, it is evident, that the Author confines Salvation to the *Jews* only: For when the Saints come to be mark'd and enter'd into the Book of Life, to prevent their common Destruction with the *Gentile* World, there are none mark'd and enter'd but *Jews*; only twelve thousand out of each Tribe are mark'd for Life, and these are gathered and selected out of every Kindred, Tongue and Nation, where they were then scattered and dispersed; but not one *Gentile* was to be saved. They were all to be given up to the Sword, Plague, and Famine, or such Judgments by which God had determined

determined to destroy the fourth to make room for the fifth Monarchy; which looks very unlike converting the whole World by Argument and Reason, and by the Motives and Inducements of Beneficence and Love, under a Kingdom, or State of Government, that must depend upon inward Conviction and free Choice. But all this is very agreeable to the Nature and Genius of the *Jewish* Religion, in which the Knowledge and Worship of the true God was to be promoted and secured by Force and Persecution, and by rooting out Idolatry, and destroying Idolaters by Fire and Sword.

It has been commonly said, that the *Jewish* Religion and Government was a *Theocracy*; and that no Consequences can be drawn from a Theocracy to any other mere human Forms of Government: But this surely must be a great Mistake, for it can scarcely be doubted, that if God was to form any Scheme or Model of Government, it would be, in all Respects, the fittest, wisest, and best that could be pitch'd on, and worthy to be imitated and follow'd under every other State and Constitution, in all human Wisdom and Policy; to deny this would be to affront God, and in Effect to deny his Righteousness and superior Wisdom. And, therefore, I hope the Patrons of the old Scheme of the *Jewish Law, Religion,* and they who would now found Christianity

on *Judaism*, will consider a little what they are about before they go much farther.

This was the *Jewish* Christianity, or Christian *Judaism*, exactly agreeable to their old *Egyptian* Superstition, and the gross Notions they always had of Religion; which they placed chiefly in mere external, useles Rites and Ceremonies, founded it on Force, and expected the greatest temporal Wealth and Power, as the Reward of it from God.

When they became Christians, or profess'd Faith in Jesus, as their national Messiah, the Restorer of the Kingdom, or the Hope and Salvation of *Israel*, they did not alter their Temper, or their old Religion, in any one Particular. They still expected the same national, temporal Deliverance, and had nothing more at Heart, than to be thoroughly revenged upon the *Gentile* World. They rejected all Overtures for an Accommodation, and resolv'd to crucify a thousand Messiahs, rather than take in the *Gentiles* as Partakers in the Kingdom with the primitive, elect People of God. And from hence Christianity, or the Faith of Christ, as receiv'd and profess'd by them, was nothing but a political Faction among themselves, and a new State Division added to three or four more which they had before. The only Question among the *Jews* at that Time, was, Whether this Jesus was that Prince of the House of *David*, who was
to

to restore the Kingdom, and crown all the Hopes and Views which they had receiv'd from their antient Prophets? But amidst this Debate, and national Division, no Christian *Jew* ever believ'd in Jesus as the common Saviour of the World, who was to bring Mankind to Righteousness and Immortality, by a new Law of his own, independent of the Ordinances of *Moses*. Christ in his Life Time had many Things to say, which that Generation could not bear, and which must have eluded the whole Design of his divine Mission, had he declared it then. And the principal Thing here was, no doubt, his coming into the World, as the common Saviour of Mankind, without any Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*. And, therefore, when he began his own proper Ministry, after the Death of *John Baptist*, and sent out his twelve Apostles and the Seventy, two and two, it was with an express Order not to go among the *Gentiles*, or Profelytes of the Gate, nor to enter into any of the Cities of the *Samaritans*, but to preach Repentance in his Name among the circumcised *Jews*, and to declare that he was sent to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*. And this express Exclusion, both of the *Gentiles* and *Samaritans*, is an evident Proof, that Christ himself, while he abode on Earth, did not think it proper, or expedient, to open his Commission farther; and that the Pre-

judices even of his own Apostles and Disciples, and of the whole Circumcision, in this Case, were invincible. And this national Prejudice they continued in for a long Time after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. They had preach'd him as their national Messiah, or the Restorer of the Kingdom to the House of *David*, at least five Years, to the circumcised *Jews* only; and the Holy Ghost, which they had received, had not led them into any other Truth, but that the Kingdom of the Messiah was to be confined to the Circumcision only. And though *Peter* afterwards, who was supposed to keep the Keys, opened the Gates of the Kingdom to the devout *Gentiles* or Profelytes, yet neither he nor any of the rest of these circumcised Christians could ever be prevail'd on to let in the Heathen *Gentiles*, without Profelytism or *Jewish* Naturalization. This is evident from the Occasions and Decisions of that circumcised Christian Council, *Acts* xv. And this was the true and only Ground of all *St. Paul's* Conflicts and Troubles with the Apostles and Teachers of the Circumcision, when, by an immediate Revelation to himself, he came to preach Christ, as the common Saviour of the World, without any Regard to the Laws or Ordinances of *Moses*. *St. Paul* strenuously asserts himself to have been constituted and appointed the sole Apostle of the *Gentiles*, by

a Revelation from Christ; he denies all Jurisdiction and Authority of the Circumcision over them, not excepting, but expressly including *Peter* himself; he declares to the *Gentiles* whom he had converted, that he had deliver'd to them the whole Will of God, and that they were to receive no other Gospel, or entertain no other Faith of Christ, but as the common Saviour of Mankind, by a new Law of his own, without any Regard to the Law of *Moses*, or the Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*. And he most pathetically and earnestly exhorts his *Gentile* Converts to stand by this Liberty of the true Gospel, which he had preach'd to them, against all the *Judai-zers*, or circumcised Christians in the World. And this was the vast Difference between the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Christians at first, and in the Apostolical Age itself, That one believ'd in and receiv'd Christ, as the Hope and Salvation of *Israel* only, or as the Restorer of their Kingdom; and the other as the Hope and Salvation of all Men alike, without Regard to any such fifth Monarchy, or temporal *Jewish* Kingdom.

Theoph. This was a very wide Difference indeed; and at this Rate the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Christianity, or *Peter's* Religion and *Paul's*, were as opposite and inconsistent as Light and Darkneſs, Truth and Falshood. But, if this had been the Case, pray, how came

came the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, so soon afterwards, to unite into one Catholick, Christian Church?

Philal. Their Persecutions drove them together; and particularly that first and bloody Persecution under *Nero*, as well as those that follow'd, in which the *Gentile* Christians were punish'd as *Jews*: For when the *Gentile* Converts found, that the Heathen *Gentiles* were their common Enemies, they united with the *Jewish* Christians, to the great Advantage of *Judaism* in the Christian Church. They separated from the Heathen *Gentiles*, as the *Jews* had always done before, and so became *Jewish* Profelytes, which had been the chief Thing in Dispute. They likewise came into the Notion of the fifth Monarchy, or a temporal *Jewish* Kingdom, by the sudden Coming of Christ from Heaven, to destroy the *Roman* Empire, and to set up his own Kingdom at *Jerusalem*. And the *Gentile* Christians being thus far reconciled to the Christian *Jews*, they join'd with them likewise in setting up a Hierarchy in the Church, or an external, visible Authority and Jurisdiction over Conscience in Matters of Religion and eternal Salvation. This Hierarchy they call'd the true, visible, Catholick Church, out of which there could be no Salvation. They assum'd all the extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Apostles, to cast out Devils, and to give the Holy Ghost.

Nay, they assum'd and claim'd the sole Prerogative of God himself, and not only to give the Holy Ghost in its miraculous Power, but to convey the saving Grace, and sanctifying Spirit of God too. They pretended, by their Consecrations and priestly Authority, to inspire and indue the Elements in the two Sacraments with supernatural and divine Virtue, so as to enable them to illuminate and purify the Mind, by their authoritative Application, as their natural Qualities acted upon the Body by strengthening, invigorating, and nourishing it. And the Efficacy of all this they declared to depend on their Administrations, and the regular Succession of their Bishops from the Apostles. They excluded all Hereticks, or Dissenters and Protestants, who would not submit to this Church Authority, or Antichristian Hierarchy, out of the Kingdom of Heaven; and declared episcopal Disobedience to be not only a damnable, but unpardonable Sin, never to be expiated, even by the Blood of Martyrdom.

This was the primitive, Catholick Church in the first three Centuries; and how far it differed from the present *Roman Catholick Church*, I may leave any one to judge. For though our modern Catholicks may espouse and maintain many Absurdities and false Doctrines, which the most antient Catholicks did not; yet the Nature of their Hierarchy, and Powers which they claim, are both the same.

I must, therefore, maintain the Pope and his Clergy to be the true Successors of these primitive, persecuting Catholicks.

Theoph. You have here run a very strange and most invidious Comparison. But it is wonderful, methinks, that the whole Catholick Church, so soon after the Apostles, and even their immediate Successors, should fall into such a general Apostasy and State of Antichristianity!

Philal. You are mistaken to think, that the Catholicks were then the *whole Church*, or the *best Christians*, any more than they are now. They called themselves the *Catholick Church*, because they were the *Majority*, and because they had Impudence enough, upon the Strength of this Majority, to claim a universal Authority over the Consciences of all Christians. They pretended to be the true and only rightful Successors of the Apostles, by a visible, regular, and uninterrupted lineal Descent. They assumed all the ordinary and extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Apostles, and particularly *Peter's Power* of the Keys, to let Men into, or shut them out of the Church of Christ, and Kingdom of Heaven, as they thought fit, under the Direction of the Holy Ghost. They made themselves the only authoritative Interpreters, and executive Judges of the Laws of Christ. They pronounced all, who rejected their Authority and Jurisdiction over Conscience, to be for ever
excluded

excluded out of the Kingdom of Heaven; and this episcopal Disobedience they declared to be not only a damnable, but an unpardonable Sin: These were the reasonable Demands, and righteous Claims of the most antient *Catholicks*: But, at the same Time, there were great Numbers of Dissenters and Protesters against this Antichristian Claim of spiritual Power, and who strenuously asserted and maintained the Liberty of Conscience, and Right of private Judgment, upon St. *Paul's* Scheme, against any such general and enormous Apostasy, and Depravation of all Religion, by a Power claim'd from *Peter*. But these truly primitive Christians, who maintained Liberty of Conscience, and the Right of private Judgment, against these pretended, authoritative *Catholicks*, were branded as Hereticks, called in Derision by the general Name of *Gnosicks*, because they pretended to be wiser than the Church, and claimed a Right of judging for themselves; for which Insolence and Rebellion they were doom'd to eternal Damnation, without any Hope or Possibility of Pardon. That this *Catholick*, anathematizing Church was the persecuting, idolatrous, Antichristian Church, as soon as they had got the temporal Power, is past all Dispute, by the cruel Work and horrible Slaughters which they made of Hereticks or Dissenters, in the fourth Century; and which holy Method of saving Souls, and convert-

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ing Men to the true Faith, the holy, visible Catholick Church has pursued ever since. And from all this, they have prov'd that their Antichristian Kingdom, or visible Catholick, authoritative Church had subsisted before Mr. *Whiston's* Date by several hundred Years; and that St. *Paul* was not in the wrong, when he declared it commenced in his Time; and that it would be more fully and completely revealed and established as soon as *he* [*this Apostle himself*] *who then hindered it, should be taken out of the Way.* This is the plain and natural Construction of St. *Paul's* Words and Sense; and all History, from that Time to this, has confirm'd it.

Theoph. I find you take the *Jewish* Christianity to be the Antichristian Hierarchy, or external, visible, and mere human Jurisdiction over Conscience, in Matters of outward Profession and Practice; and the true Religion and Gospel of Christ, as reveal'd to, and preach'd by St. *Paul*, and embraced then and afterwards by his Disciples and Followers, you suppose to consist of Liberty of Conscience, and the Right of private Judgment, and in sincerely obeying the Will of God, as it shall appear to a Man after his own impartial Enquiry, without regarding the Authority or Judgment of others: As all true and acceptable Religion must be founded in inward Conviction, and free Choice.

Philal. You take the Matter perfectly right; and while you keep to this Distinction, you can never confound the two opposite States and Kingdoms of Christ and Antichrist. You will find, through the whole Course of Story, from the very Apostolick Age, that the Hierarchical Bishops and Clergy, with their Party and Adherents, by pretending to be the *Catholick Church*, and to have received the Power of the Keys, or the Right of saving and damning from *St. Peter*; assum'd a Dominion over Conscience, lorded it over God's Heritage, and claim'd and exercis'd a Power absolutely inconsistent with private Judgment, rational Enquiry, and free Choice in Matters of Religion: And this they did under the Pretence of a sacred, secret Deposition left with themselves, and derived to them by an uninterrupted, regular, visible, and lineal Succession of Bishops from *St. Peter*. And tho' they could never prove, by any authentick Evidence, that *Peter* ever was at *Rome*, or that his apostolical Office and Character would admit of his being Bishop there; yet they built the *Roman Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, upon this most absurd and senseless Supposition. But still, it must be own'd, that this hierarchical Form of Government in the Church did not begin at *Rome*: It began at *Antioch* in *Syria*, which was the Mother Church of *Christendom*, till the Conversion of the *Roman Emperors* shut her out, and substituted *Rome* and
Constan-

Constantinople in her Place. But still you will find the same hierarchical Antichristian Scheme in the Apocalypse, the Apostolical Constitutions, and the Epistles of *Ignatius*, from the Days of that famous Saint and Protomartyr to the Hierarchy, to the renown'd Bishop of R-----r, and the celebrated Dr. Sa----el. A Period of above sixteen hundred Years; and which has been sufficient to give the World abundant Proofs and Samples of the wise and righteous Government of the holy, visible Catholick Church. The very same Church that governed *Christendom* by an Antichristian, usurped Authority over Conscience at first, maintained their Dominion afterwards, by the *Roman* Imperial Power: And having obtained this, they opened another Scene in the fourth Century, by crushing all Dissenters, shutting up their Churches, and pursuing them to Death, and thereby ruining more Christian Families, and shedding more Christian Blood in sixty Years, than the *Roman Pagan* Emperors had done in three hundred. In all which, they made it evidently appear, that they aim'd more at their own temporal Wealth and Dominion, than at promoting the spiritual Kingdom of Christ.

Theoph. You talk very severely of this holy, visible Catholick Church; especially as you date it so very early as from the Time of *Ignatius*, and the Apostolick Constitutions. That the Catholick Bishops and Clergy soon
fell

fell into a great and general Apostasy, after they had got the temporal Power into their Hands, and could make the Emperors their Executioners and Hang-men, is very true: But I know not what temporal Wealth and Power they could aim at before, unless it were the worldly Riches and Dominion of Martyrdom.

Philal. You are mistaken. They had a Chance to escape Martyrdom, but they had no Chance to escape worldly Wealth and Power, while they absolutely governed the Consciences of their Catholick-believing Adherents: For though the Church was not then so rich or numerous, yet Men would give any Thing else in their Power for their Souls, to those who had the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and could save or damn at their Pleasure. It is certain, that a Bishoprick was a good Thing, and that there had been great Contentions and Squabbles for it, long before the Emperors had so vastly enrich'd and endow'd the Churches. And tho' the primitive Bishops could not govern the *World*, yet they governed and fleeced their *own Flocks*. This was enough to make them richer and happier than the poor People, who were as liable to Martyrdom as they, and much more desirous of it, as they could have no great Matter to expect in this Life, where they must be first stript and fleeced by their spiritual Pastors, and then burnt or de-

your'd by wild Beasts, as the Reward of their Constancy and Patience. These Catholick Bishops and Clergy made the People believe, that they had infinitely better submit to the most agonizing and torturous Death, than to withdraw their Obedience from them, and turn Dissenters, Protestants, or Hereticks and Schismatics; in which Case they had nothing to expect but eternal Damnation, without any Hope of Pardon, or Possibility of the least Mercy from God. This was their horrible and tremendous Scheme of Church Power in the three first Centuries, which these truly primitive Catholicks strengthened and improved afterwards, with all the additional Terrors of this World, and all the Antichristian Abuse of civil Power.

Theoph. Methinks, you have almost brought me out of Conceit with the holy, visible, Catholick, hierarchical Church, from first to last. I must own, that I had always had a very bad Opinion of those antient Sectaries, or Dissenters, whom these primitive Catholicks condemned as Hereticks. And, indeed, many of them must have entertain'd Principles and Notions grossly absurd and immoral, if the Testimony of those most antient Catholicks is to be taken upon any Credit.

Philal. But would you thus take the Testimony of Enemies now? Suppose all the Protestant Writings to be lost and destroy'd, and that future Generations were to take the Characters,

Characters, Opinions, and Conduct of the Protestants and Dissenters of this and some former Ages, from the Popish Writers only, and the Accounts which they would give of them: Would you think this a fair Representation, or that any Truth could be from hence derived? It may be true enough that these antient Protestants, Dissenters and Sectaries, might many of them maintain absurd and idle Notions, which is certainly the Case at this Day; but this could never give the Catholicks, or hierarchical Clergy, any Authority or Jurisdiction over their Consciences, or justify them in sending Men to the Devil without Mercy, and without giving them Leave to think and judge for themselves. They called the Dissenters and Protestants of that Time in general *Gnosticks*, as pretending to a superior Wisdom, and a Right of judging for themselves, against the Authority of the Church. They branded all Dissenters at that Time, as being the Disciples of *Simon Magus*, though they might, with equal Justice, have deriv'd them from *Potiphar* Priest of *On*, or the *Egyptian* Magicians. But, in short, the grand Herefy, and in which all the separate Parties at that Time agreed, was denying the Authority of the Church, and pleading the Liberty of Conscience, and Right of private Judgment, against the Majority. As such Protesters and Separatists disclaim'd, with one Voice, any

outward, temporal Jurisdiction over Conscience, and charged the Catholicks with *Judaizing* and keeping up the Authority of the old Law, or the *Jewish* Principle of a persecuting Power.

Theoph. But, surely, these Hereticks, whom you will have to be the Protestants and Dissenters of those Times, and the only People who asserted and maintained true Christian Liberty, and opposed the growing Exorbitance of Church Power, were most of them Idolaters, and join'd with the Heathens, not only in common Eating and Drinking, Cohabitation and Inter-marriages, but even in publick Festivals, or Sacrifices instituted in Honour, and to the Memory of their Idols and false Gods; at which Solemnities they were invoked and worshipped as their Protectors, Guardians, and Deliverers. And when the Catholicks charged them with this scandalous and criminal Practice, they endeavoured to excuse and justify themselves by declaring, that they received it only as common Food, and to its natural Uses, without any Faith in, or mental Adoration of the Idol.

Philal. What you here observe, was, I believe, true, at least with respect to many of the Parties and Sects of those Separatists; but then, their Plea for it was very just and reasonable, and plainly grounded on St. *Paul's* Doctrine and Declarations in this very Case.

This

This Apostle declares, that the Idol was nothing to him as to his own Judgment and Conscience, and the Meat offered to him no more than common Food. He said, indeed, that he would abstain from it rather than offend a weak Brother, or tempt others to do a Thing against their Consciences, or with a scrupulous Conscience; but was not for Mens abstaining from it merely to humour the imperious, domineering *Judaizers*, or because they declared and pronounced it sinful. In this Sense St. *Paul* allow'd and justify'd the Practice in his *Gentile* Converts, and stood to it as long as he liv'd against the whole Circumcision, and all the *Judaizers* in the Christian Church. In this, therefore, these Hereticks or Separatists only maintained that Liberty which their great Apostle, Father, and Founder, had established them in, and exhorted them to hold fast. And while they could not be charged with any Vice, Immorality, or moral Wickedness, and were more peaceable and loyal Subjects than the Catholics themselves; this only shews that these pretended Catholics were the true *Judaizers*, and that they had even then laid the Foundation of that enormous Antichristian Power and Kingdom, which succeeded and was built upon it. And if one was to enter farther into the Character of the Catholics of those Times, one should find it exactly answering to St. *Paul's* Mystery of Iniquity

then working, and to his own Description of that Antichristian Power and Dominion under the Man of Sin, or Son of Perdition, which was then just ready to be revealed. These Catholicks assum'd all the extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Apostles themselves, and pretended to cast out Devils, to cure all Manner of Diseases, and to convey the Holy Ghost, as the Apostles did. They assum'd the Throne of God in their usurped Dominion over Conscience, and claim'd a Power of the Keys, to open or shut the Gates of the Kingdom authoritatively, and as they thought fit, since they themselves were to be the sole Judges. And they supported this most impious Claim of Authority by *false Miracles and lying Wonders, in all the Deceivableness of Unrighteousness.* Tertullian, in his Time, about the End of the second Century, challenges the Heathens to bring any of their Incurables, their Possess'd, their Lunaticks, Epilepticks, &c. into their Assemblies; and if they did not restore them, they should then throw them to the wild Beasts, or do what they pleas'd with them. This is, indeed, a bold and surprizing Challenge, to take it as it lies. But the Truth of the Matter was, that they could work these Miracles only on themselves, and their own Confederates; for could they have made such Cures among the Heathens, they might soon have convinced and converted them.

But

But the Imposture having been detected, exposed them to the greater Indignation and Contempt, till they had got the temporal Power on their Side, and brought the Emperors themselves into the Cheat; and then they made thorough Work of it, and set the whole believing and astonish'd World a gazing on their priestly Juggles, and lying Wonders.

Theoph. You have here strangely turned the Tables between the primitive Catholicks and Hereticks. For my own Part, I am not sufficiently versed in the Story to talk upon it now; and must, therefore, leave you to the Correction of our modern Catholick and orthodox Clergy, if you are mistaken. But the great and main Question still remains undecided: And that is, wherein Christianity consists, or how a Man may know whether he be truly and really a Christian or not? And here, I must tell you, that the general Principle of Sincerity will by no Means do. *Sincerity*, without *Truth*, can be no *Religion* at all, either natural or reveal'd. If Christianity, therefore, be any Religion at all, it must contain some Truth or Truths, as necessary and essential to it, and without the Belief and Practice of which no Man can be a Christian. But, surely, we live, methinks, in a strange World, where every Body is crying up Christianity as the most excellent Religion, while no Body can tell us

what it is! All that go under the same common Denomination cannot, I am sure, be really Christians, in any proper, determinate Sense of the Name, while they are continually excommunicating and damning one another, and eternally disputing about their own Fundamentals. And tho' they may do this 'ever so sincerely, yet that cannot prove, that they are any of them *Christians*, or that they so much as know what they mean by the *Word*.

Philal. You know, *Theophanes*, that I am a profess'd Christian Deist. And, therefore, I must take Christianity, as to the Substance and doctrinal Parts of it, to be a Revival of the Religion of Nature; in which the several Duties and Obligations of moral Truth and Righteousness are more clearly stated and explained, enforced by stronger Motives, and encouraged with the Promises of more effectual Aids and Assurances by Jesus Christ, the great Christian Prophet, than ever had been done before by any other Prophet, Moralist, or Lawgiver in Religion. And, I am the more confirm'd in this Notion of Christianity, by observing, that they who have gone a contrary Way, and endeavoured to make up a Religion different from the Religion of Nature, and consisting in speculative Opinions, doubtful Disputations, external Rituals, arbitrary Laws, and mere positive Institutions, which have no intrinick Goodness in them,
and

and no natural Connexion with moral Truth and Righteousness; that these Schematists, I say, have never been able to find any Resting-Place for the Soals of their Feet, but have been continually dividing and inflaming the World about the very Essentials and Fundamentals of Christianity, as you have very justly and seasonably observ'd. After all the learned Contentions and bloody Persecutions of above sixteen hundred Years, Christianity is still an *Individuum Vagum*, an *Ens Rationis*, or a Thing always to be talk'd of, but never understood. But, I do not think that Christianity is in itself such a mysterious, unintelligible Thing. Christianity does not so much depend upon Miracles and Prophecies, or on the Sense and Construction of antient Authors, writ in Languages that we do not well understand, and often in a very obscure Stile, from Occasions and under Circumstances, that we cannot be sufficiently appriz'd of to be always certain of their Meaning, or even so as not to be often left under the greatest Doubts and Uncertainties: But the Christian Religion rather depends on the most plain and necessary Truths, such as are founded in the eternal, immutable Reason and Fitness of Things; and which must, therefore, be always and every where the same. The Religion of Jesus consists in the inward, spiritual Worship of one true God, by a strict Regard to all the Duties and Obligations of
moral

moral Truth and Righteousness, in Opposition to all the animal Affections, and mere bodily Appetites, and to the Bent and Bias of a corrupt, degenerate World, which would draw us another Way: And all this, under the Powers and Influences of a future, invisible World, or the firm Belief and Expectation of Immortality and eternal Life, as a free Gift and Reward from God for such moral Righteousness or Gospel Obedience. And because Jesus Christ came into the World, and was sent from God to restore, revive, and republish this Religion, after it had been lost in the general Superstition, Idolatry, and gross Ignorance of Mankind, both *Jew* and *Gentile*; and to enforce it with stronger Motives, and encourage it with better Promises, and more effectual Aids, than ever had been done before; therefore, he is the great Prophet of our Profession. And thus far, *Theophanes*, I am a Christian, and at the same Time a Deist, or, if you please, this is my Christian Deism; but as for *Moses* and the Prophets, though I admire them, as Politicians, Historians, Orators, and Poets, I have nothing to do with them in Religion, as I cannot possibly be of their Religion. But as for true and real Christianity, I think there could be no great Dispute about it, if Men would only take in the Substance and Essentials of it, and either leave out, or not much insist on the

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Circumstantials; of which we have but a very obscure and imperfect Account, and that frequently not consistent with itself, or with the Character and Design of the Person spoken of. In short, I think it will be impossible for Men ever to come to any certain Rule of Faith, or Standard of Christianity, while they place the Essentials of this Religion in any Thing else but the Doctrines and Duties of moral Truth and Righteousness, as they were reviv'd, republish'd, farther explain'd, enforc'd and encourag'd by Jesus Christ, as the great Prophet of this Holy Profession. And it must the more confirm any Man in this Notion and View of Christianity, who will but consider the different Rules of Faith, and Measures of Judgment, which have hitherto been try'd and found ineffectual; and which have been so far from procuring the Peace, Unity, or Purity of the Church, that they have served to no other Purpose, but to distract, divide, and inflame.

During the Apostolick Age, or at least in the first and purest Part of it, while St. *Paul* liv'd, and his *Gentile* Churches flourish'd, the baptismal Creed or Profession was thought sufficient; in which Men were baptiz'd in the *Name, i. e.* into the *Faith* and *Profession* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: In which they were openly and publickly to profess and declare, that they believed in one only true
God

God the Father, the Almighty and omniscient Creator, Former, Sustainer, Governor, and Disposer of all Things visible and invisible, whether in Heaven or Earth: In one Lord Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and Man, and the great Prophet, who had fully, clearly, and most effectually reveal'd the Will of God for the Salvation of the World: And in one Holy Ghost or sanctifying Spirit, as animating, aiding, and assisting all the Faithful in purifying their Hearts, supporting them in all Afflictions and Trials, and encouraging and directing them in the Way of Peace, Love and Holiness, to Immortality and eternal Life. This I take to have been the first, pure, Apostolical Creed. But soon after, as the *Judaizers* prevailed, upon St. *Paul's* Death, and assum'd the Name and Dignity of the *Catholick Church*, they added another Article, *i. e.* that Remission of Sins and Life everlasting could only be obtain'd in and by the Holy Catholick Church, or by themselves, and their own Administrations, as the only visible, authoritative Executors and Trustees of Christ and the Apostles. And this Privilege the *Judaizing Church*, or *Catholicks*, soon came to claim as an Apostolick Tradition, which they had receiv'd by a visible, uninterrupted, lineal Succession, and Exercise of Authority from the Apostles; and which, as they pretended, had been thus left as a sacred Deposita

positum with them, which none of the Hereticks, Protestants or Separatists could know any Thing of, or reap any Benefit from, but in full Communion with, and Submission to them. But they found that even this Plea and Rule of Faith would not long serve their Turn; and, therefore, they were obliged to fly to the Authority of the Church in Synods and Councils, in which a few ignorant, superstitious Bishops meeting together in some small Province or Corner of the World, pretended to be under the immediate Directions of the Holy Ghost, and to make Laws and Decretals for all *Christendom*, even for such as were not present, and consenting, either in Person, or by any Delegation, and who could not, in Conscience, submit to their Authority. I should have said, that about this Time the Catholicks had collected a Canon of Scripture, and endeavoured to make themselves the sole, authoritative Interpreters of it; but finding that the Hereticks, or protesting Recusants would not submit to any such authoritative Judgment and Interpretation, they recurr'd to a new Method of Synods and Councils, in which they might secure and defend the Truth, by the Voice and Suffrage of a Majority. But neither did this avail much, while the Catholicks had no temporal Power in their Hands; for the Hereticks not regarding their Anathema's and Ecclesiastical Thunders, went on in their own Way, and
thought

thought they might go to Heaven without them. And as the Hereticks, upon this Foot of Liberty, daily increased and grew more and more numerous, it might have proved fatal to the Catholicks, had they not got the Imperial Power on their Side before they had lost the Majority. But when this Point had been gain'd, all went smoothly on for a Time; and the Hereticks, or obstinate Sectaries and Separatists, in about sixty or seventy Years, were destroyed and exterminated by the holy Zeal, and godly Discipline of the Catholick, infallible Church.

But this Rule of Faith, and Centre of Unity did not last long; for the Catholicks soon fell together by the Ears among themselves, and afterwards nothing was more common than for one General, Catholick Council of Bishops to excommunicate, anathematize and damn another; and thus the Christian Bishops and Clergy were Catholicks and Hereticks by Turns, as the Wind of Court Favour happened to blow, or as the Emperors fell in sometimes with one Side, and sometimes with the other. Such a Dupe and Stalking-Horse in those Days did they make of the *Holy Ghost*.

But after they had try'd the whole Power and Authority of these Councils for about three hundred Years, in which Time the Flames were blown up higher and higher, and no Peace or Unity in the Church ever like to be obtain'd; they thought of another,
and

and a new Expedient, or Rule of Faith, which they imagined must put an End to all Controversies about Faith and Religion: And that was *a living, infallible Judge*, with temporal Power enough in his Hands to controul and prevent all Difference of Opinion. And here, as the Bishops and Emperors had behaved so ill, and so little answered the Trust which God had reposed in them, the Popes wrested the Authority out of both their Hands, assum'd all Power both in Heaven and Earth, and declar'd themselves the only Vicars and Vicegerents of Christ upon Earth.

And this for several hundred Years had a hopeful Aspect, and seem'd to promise fair for Peace and Unity in the Church; for it had scarce left so much as the Appearance of Religion or Conscience in the World. Every one was content to believe as the Church believ'd, without knowing what or why. Mankind were now put into a saveable State of Darkness, in which Ignorance was the Mother of Devotion. The Christian Clergy in general were sunk into the grossest and most scandalous State of moral Wickedness, such as had never been known among the Heathens. No Man could be damn'd, but for Want of Money, and the Church had such a Market, that little else was talk'd of but buying and selling of Souls. The infallible Judge assum'd the Crowns of Princes, and dispos'd of their Kingdoms at Pleasure. All that
that

that would not submit to his infallible Decisions in Matters of Faith, were to be burnt as Hereticks, and then given up for all Eternity to the Devil, and committed to the hotter and more outrageous Fire of Hell. This was now the Christian Rule of Faith, and the Holy Catholick Method of converting and saving Souls.

In all this, Damnation was the great and useful Engine, by which they wrought upon the Superstition and Fears of their implicate Believers. Nothing less than the eternal Torments of Hell could be the Portion of those who refused Obedience to the Church, or questioned her Authority and Jurisdiction over Conscience. But in this Doctrine, they contradicted Scripture as much as they did Reason, and represented God, contrary to his Nature, and all his Attributes, as an almighty, implacable, merciless Revenger, merely to gratify their own Malice and Lust of Power. A most horrid and diabolical Notion, which they took from the wicked, revengeful *Jews*, and which was not at all founded in any Thing that Christ or the Apostles had said of it.

It is true, that the Fire which is utterly to consume, destroy, and burn up the wicked in the last Day, is called everlasting Fire, because its Effects will be everlasting, and there can be no possible Recovery from this second Death. And thus the Fire which
consumed

consumed the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, is called everlasting Fire, because those Cities were destroyed for ever, never to be restored more. And thus this last destroying Fire is said to be unquenchable, because no Power or Policy can extinguish it, or deliver the Ungodly out of it, till it has utterly consumed and destroyed the Subject. But, that the second Death, which wicked Men must undergo after they have been raised, and received their Sentence, should be an eternal Life in Torments, without ever dying more; that a consuming and destroying, should be an unconsuming, immortalizing Fire; that the mortal and corruptible Bodies with which the wicked shall be rais'd, should be immortal and uncorruptible, which is the sole Privilege of the Just; that eternal Death and utter Destruction should signify Immortality, and eternal Life in Misery; and that when the profess'd End and Design of Christ's Coming into the World, was to destroy the Devil and his Kingdom, and all his Works, and to abolish and put an End to Sin and Death for ever; that he should in the Event come to establish the Devil's Empire for ever in Hell over the far greater Part of Mankind, and to perpetuate and immortalize Sin and Hell, instead of extirpating and destroying them: These are such gross and glaring Contradictions, as cannot be reconciled to the natural Use of Words in any Language. And

yet when this Doctrine shall be given up as altogether unscriptural, as well as false, impossible, and contradictory in itself, the holy, Catholick, Antichristian Church must lose her main Pillar and Support. And I wish that some of our Protestant, Orthodox Clergy may not find themselves at a little Loss. But, surely, the hierarchical Clergy in general, if they would retain any Thing of their spiritual Dominion and Jurisdiction over Conscience, must stand up strenuously for the Devil, and maintain, with all their Might, the Perpetuity of his Power and Kingdom. But this I must own as a Digression, tho' it happened to fall so naturally in my Way, that I could not well avoid it.

Theoph. I am very glad, *Philaethes*, that it did fall in your Way. It is a very important Point, and if it could be thoroughly cleared up, it might serve to resolve most of the Difficulties that have hitherto been raised about the Conduct of Providence in general, or the Christian Religion in particular. But, I must ask your Pardon for this Interruption. I would not hold you long from the Thread of your Discourse; and, therefore, pray go on with your Rule of Faith.

Philal. I am ready to oblige you, *Theophanes*, so far as I can; and, therefore, you may observe, that after this Catholick Rule of Faith, the persecuting, Antichristian Power of the Church had prevail'd for many hundred

dred Years, to the Purposes as before-mentioned, some great and bold Men, at length, in several Parts of *Europe*, began to consider, that this could never be the right Way to Salvation, and that these infallible Judges must certainly have mistaken the Rule of Faith. Upon which they resolv'd to attempt a Reformation, by returning again to the old Canon of Scripture. But herein they were not so happy, as could be wish'd, since they set up the Scriptures in gross in its Prophecies, Histories, and Morals without Exception, as a *dead, infallible Rule*, in Opposition to a *living, infallible Judge*. But then, when they had got this infallible Rule fairly translated into their own Language, they could not infallibly understand and apply it; which made it, to all Intents and Purposes, a fallible Rule to them, and a Nose of Wax, which they could form and model according to their Pleasure. And this left as much Room for Divisions and Disputes as before: Which has accordingly happened among the Protestants themselves, while they have been continually wrangling, dividing and subdividing, excommunicating and damning one another, even about the Essentials and Fundamentals of Christianity. And from hence they have demonstrated to the whole World, that they are so far from having an infallible Rule, that they have, in Effect, no certain, determinate or intelligible Rule at all. The Dispute, there-

fore, between Papists and Protestants hitherto, has been generally not about *Infallibility* itself, but the *Subject* of it: Not whether every Man may not be infallibly and indubitably certain in Matters of historical Faith, but how he shall come by it.

But there was one great Unhappiness, which attended the Protestant Reformation at first, that the leading Men engaged in it, introduced a most strange and monstrous Scheme of Doctrinals, and pleaded the infallible Rule for the Truth of them; while they were neither contain'd in Scripture, nor so much as possible in the Nature and Reason of Things. Some of these they had before implicitly receiv'd from the Authority of the Church, and continued to espouse and maintain without farther Examination; and others they invented and coin'd afterwards, and then endeavoured to support both, by the Infallibility of Scripture; and between the one and the other, they patch'd up a System of Christian Faith, which, perhaps, was the most absurd and unintelligible, that ever had been advanced in the World. And this gave the learned *Jesuites* a great Advantage over them, and put a Stop to the Reformation, which otherwise, in all Probability, must have prevail'd universally, had it been put upon the true Foot of Scripture and Reason.

Our first Reformers unanimously maintain'd, that God was three distinct Persons, or intelligent Agents, and that the one Creator and Governor of the World was three Creators and Governors of the World, not, indeed, separately and divided, but conjunctly and undivided. They taught and maintain'd, that Jesus of *Nazareth*, or the Man born of the Virgin, was really no human Person, or had no human Personality or Agency at all; but that he was personally God most high, or the very supreme Being himself; and that consequently his human Body and Soul did not constitute a human Person or Agent, but was only the Organ, or passive Instrument of God's acting by the Power of the Holy Ghost. They asserted and maintain'd, that if Christ had not been the supreme God, he could not have made an infinite Satisfaction for Sin, or have suffered infinite Pains and Penalties; which yet was necessary to the Pardon of Sin, and without which, God could not, upon any Condition or Consideration at all, have shewn the least Mercy, or extended the least Compassion to his Creatures. They taught and asserted in the strongest Terms, that Men must be justify'd and accepted of God, by Faith in Christ without Gospel Obedience; and that it was damnable Presumption to expect or hope for any Favour from God in Consequence, or on the Condition of the

most sincere Obedience and personal Righteousness in a Man's Power; So grossly did these new Reasoners upon Scripture misunderstand St. *Paul's* Doctrine of Justification by Faith without Works, or by Gospel Obedience in Opposition to the external Rituals and carnal Institutions of the *Mosaick* Law; which latter is what this Apostle always means by *Works*, or the *Works of the Law*, whenever he excludes them from any Share or Concern in the Business of Salvation and Justification with God. They taught and maintain'd, that the Faith enjoin'd by the Gospel was no Part of our Obedience, or no human Act at all, but an immediate Effect and Operation of the Spirit upon the passive Mind, as an Instrument of apprehending, receiving, and applying Christ to the Soul. They taught and insisted on it, as a Matter of the greatest Importance, that no Man could do any Thing towards his own Salvation, and that it was damnable Presumption for any one to pretend to it; but that Sanctification, as well as Election, and Justification, were immediate Acts of God, without any human Concurrence; and that all such, who were, beyond all Comparison, the far greater Part of Mankind, that had not been thus elected from all Eternity, and sanctify'd in Time, by irresistible Grace, must perish everlastingly without Hope or Remedy. In short, they set aside all Nature
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and Reason for an unintelligible, contradictory Faith, which must now be the Standard of Scripture itself, and the infallible Rule and Test of Christian Orthodoxy; by which they dismounted the Pope, and advanced themselves to the Throne.

I have mention'd nothing here, but what our first Reformers insisted on and declar'd as fundamental and necessary, and without which they would not receive Men to their Communion, or own them as Brethren; and by which 'tis plain, that Men's shutting their Eyes, and quitting their Understandings in Matters of Faith, was then the true orthodox Test, and essential to Christianity. The Distinction of Fundamentals and Non-Fundamentals had prov'd of great and excellent Use till of late; but since these Fundamentals themselves came to be disputed, and many of them thrown off by Scripture Authority, the Matter of historical Faith was very much perplex'd, till some Men, wiser than the rest, thought of a new Test of Religion and Orthodoxy, which had never been propos'd and taken in before; and that is SINCERITY.

Whoever searches after the Mind and Will of God in Nature and Scripture impartially, and then acts according to his best Light, and the Measure of his Capacity upon such an Inquiry, is sincere, and consequently orthodox, and in a State of Salvation. Now

this, I think, is certainly true and indisputable; but then, perhaps, it may be too indefinite and general. For it is no more a Rule or Test in any one Scheme, or System of historical Faith, than another; or it has no more Relation to Christianity, than to any other Dispensation; for at this Rate, a *Jew*, a *Mahometan*, a *Persian*, *Indian*, or *Chintese*, may be equally sincere with the best Christian, and as much in Favour of God. But this will never do as a Rule of Christian Orthodoxy, since it is a Measure that may be apply'd to all Nations and Religions alike; and yet, perhaps, it is the only true Rule or Measure of Religion, that ever was, or ever can be thought of. But an external, visible Rule or Test of true, internal Faith and Religion, farther than what may be judged of, or concluded from a Man's outward, moral Practice and Behaviour, has been ever the Device of such as would assume the Prerogative of God, and who would vainly extend their Jurisdiction beyond their Cognizance.

Theoph. You labour hard to set aside and explode all historical Faith and Religion, as you call it, that is, all reveal'd Religion; for you can mean nothing else by it. But still I hope you will admit of some Religion, as necessary, and that the Christian Religion, which you say is the best in the World, must have some external, visible Rule of Judgment, whereby

whereby to distinguish between such as are, or are not, visibly and externally at least, Christians.

Philal. No doubt but some such Rule of external Faith, Profession and Practice might be easily contriv'd and thought on; but then the Christian Clergy hitherto must have been very thoughtless People, who could never yet contrive, or think of any such Rule. The best Test or Standard of Christianity, and of all Religion, ever yet advanced, which is *Sincerity*, has not been sufficient to distinguish sincere Christians from sincere Persons of any other Religion. But as to this Matter you need not be in much Pain, since every Christian Church can make and settle their own Terms of Communion, and either admit or exclude whom they please: But if Men do not think their Communion to be the Church Catholick, or a necessary Introduction to the Kingdom of Heaven, you must leave every Man, in this Case, to his own Judgment of Discretion, and then no Harm can be done; for if I will not be saved in your Way, it is impossible that you should compel me to it, and therefore you ought to leave me, as well as yourself, to a fair Chance of being either saved or damn'd.

Theoph. All this is Ranting, mere Evasion and Impertinence. The Question is, Whether Christianity, in your Opinion, be any Thing or Nothing; and whether it has any
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external, cognizable Rule of Judgment, or not? Must I receive and communicate with all Persons promiscuously, who appear to be Men of natural Probity, and who act up to the Principles of moral Truth and Righteousness; or am I not obliged to distinguish in this Case, and to communicate with some Persons as Christians, and not with others?

Philal. This will be a very hard Question to me, till you tell me what you here mean by Christian Communion. If you mean the Unity, Fellowship, and Communion of all Mankind, upon the common Principles of Reason and Religion; this will be one Thing: But if you mean any particular Party Interest, private Confederacy, or national Enclosure, not founded upon the common Principles of Humanity, Religion, and Reason; that will be a quite different Thing.

Theoph. I only want to know whether there is any external Distinction in human Judgment, between Christianity and other Religions, or not; or whether any such Distinction, in your Opinion, can or ought to be kept up? And here you can have no Occasion to quibble or evade, but to tell me what, in your Opinion, Christianity really is, Whether it be any Thing or nothing; and whether there be any Criterion or Distinction between this and other Religions?

Philal. You seem to press this Matter very close, and yet I have told you my Opinion about it already; that Jesus Christ, as I think, has given us the best Account of the Nature, Attributes, and Will of God, of any other Prophet or Lawgiver in the World: And, therefore, I am a Christian in Contradiction to any other historical Religion; or a Disciple of Christ in Opposition to *Moses*, *Zoroastres*, *Confucius*, *Mahomet*, or any other Reformer in Religion. But if you would have one believe and swallow by wholesale, and ingross every Thing that has been written in any historical Books of Religion, I must take Leave to beg your Pardon, and to let you know, that in this Sense, I am of no Religion at all; or which is the same Thing, I am no implicit Believer, and cannot receive any historical Facts, especially such as are extraordinary and miraculous, as infallibly true. You need not press me for my Opinion, since I am as free to give it, as you can be to ask it: And I do not take you for an Inquisitor, because I am sure you are no Priest, and, I think, no priestly Tool.

Theoph. I beg your Pardon, *Philalethes*, if I have made too free. I did not design to warm you; but still I must insist upon your Definition or Description of Christianity, which, I think, you have promised, or given me at least some Expectation of, though you have not made good your Word. If you had

had thought me a Party Zealot, I believe you would not have honoured me with so much of your Conversation. But, I should be glad to bring this Debate between us to some Issue, and to put a speedy End to it, at least, if we cannot agree upon the Matters in Question.

Philal. You must exercise your Patience a little farther for the Conclusion of this Conference; but you have had already my Definition, Description, or Account of Christianity. I take, as you know, Christianity to be that Scheme or System of Deism, natural Religion, or moral Truth and Righteousness, which was at first preached and propagated in the World, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and has since been convey'd down to us by probable, human Testimony, or historical Evidence, strengthened and confirm'd by the necessary, natural Truth, and intrinsic Goodness of the Doctrines themselves. This, Sir, is Christianity, and this is my reveal'd Religion. And if you have any other Christianity, or reveal'd Religion, you will now declare it; for I have brought the Matter to a Point with you, and shall gladly join Issue.

Theoph. What then is the Christian Revelation, is it nothing at all?

Philal. It is a Revival of the Religion of Nature, or a complete System and Transcript of moral Truth and Righteousness; And do you think this nothing?

Theoph.

Theoph. No-body will say it is nothing, but many will say it is not sufficient.

Philal. It is no Matter what the Many think or say ; But pray what do you say or think?

Theoph. I think and say, that Deism, the Religion of Nature, or moral Truth and Righteousness will never do, without some external Religion or Revelation to employ the Clergy, and keep up the Devotion of the common People. And I must think and say farther, that Matters of Speculation, and abstract Truth never influence Mankind much, till they affect the Passions, and carry Affection with Judgment.

Philal. I am intirely of your Mind ; but then the only Question is, How you would have the Passions raised and moved, whether by the Nature and Reason of Things apply'd to the Understanding, or blindly and implicitly, by such Sensations, as Passion only can feel and judge of? I can have no Opinion of the moral Effects of Actions, which are in themselves indifferent, and which have no natural Relation to, or Connexion with the End propos'd. This is the mechanical Agency of the Spirit, or the Conveyance of Grace *ex Opere operato*, by some external Work done ; a Point in which all *human Inventions* have ever terminated, and which must always distinguish them from *divine Institutions*. If the Means of any Sort are not congenerate, or of the same Kind with the
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the End, they can be no rational Means at all; and then to say that they are instituted Means, is but begging the Question, and taking for granted the Thing that ought to be prov'd. To maintain that washing or sprinkling with Water, or drinking Wine upon Bisket after Supper, can have any natural or moral Tendency to sanctify the Soul or purify the Mind, would be the same Absurdity, as maintaining that the Body may be fed, nourish'd, and supported by abstract Reasonings, Speculations, and Theorems. And the same may be apply'd to all other external indifferent Actions; a vast Number of which the Clergy have instituted and enforced in the Name of God, and which yet, to speak the plain Truth, is no better than trifling with God, and so far exposing Religion to Contempt and Ridicule. It is true, indeed, that many Actions indifferent in themselves, or in their own general, abstract Nature, may cease to be so, and become necessary in particular Cases and Instances, as they are differently related and circumstantiated. Thus Riding, Walking, cold Bathing, a particular Diet, &c. how indifferent soever in their general, abstract Nature, must cease to be indifferent, when they come to be the Means of preserving Health, removing Diseases, or fitting and disposing Men for any of the important Offices and Obligations of Life: But in such mutable Cases, which depend

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on the different and mutable Relations of Persons and Things, what may be good and beneficial to one, will be hurtful and prejudicial to another, or even to the same Person at different Times, and under different Circumstances. No general Rules or Laws therefore can be made or settled about such Matters, unless it was possible to alter the common Course of Providence, and the mutable Relations of Persons and Things, and make that fix'd and eternal, which is continually varying and changing. But I cannot yet set aside the Consideration of these mechanical Means of Grace, which, in my Opinion, have perplex'd and distracted Multitudes, but never yet inlightened the Understandings, and purify'd the Affections of any at all. But they who depend on them most, and lay the greatest Strefs upon it, are generally left under the greatest Doubts and Darkeness, and have the least Light, and the least Comfort. People often wait upon what they call outward Ordinances, and Means of Grace, like the Cripples at the Pool of *Bethesda*, and commonly go away without a Cure, for Want of taking the critical Moment, when the Spirit, as it is supposed, might have work'd upon them effectually and instantaneously, and at once have brought them out of Darkeness into Light, before they had been aware of it. They look upon Ordinances, and Means of Grace, as the Food and Phy-
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sick of the Soul, and make use of them after the same Manner, expecting spiritual Health and Life, Nourishment and Growth, from the Operation of the Spirit, like the natural, mechanical Effects of Medicines upon the Blood and Humours; while, perhaps, they never use any Means of Grace at all, nor so much as know what they mean by the Word.

Religion is purely an internal Thing, and consists ultimately in moral Truth and Righteousness, considered as an inward Character, Temper, Disposition, or Habit in the Mind. This moral Character, or Habit, has not been unfitly call'd the Religion of the End, since it is the End which all ought to aim at, as the true, moral Perfection and Happiness of human Nature, and of every intelligent Being. And this Religion of the End differs in nothing from the Religion of the Means, but as the Habit is different from its necessary, correlative Acts, which mutually and reciprocally strengthen, confirm, and improve each other; and, therefore, the Means in Religion have as clear and necessary a Relation to the End, as any natural Means can have to their proper, natural End. And as all Religion lies in the right Knowledge of God and ourselves, in acting agreeably to the Relations we stand in to one another, and to the supreme Being, and in improving this Knowledge and Practice into an internal, a-

biding Character, Disposition, and Habit, it is plain, that the great Source and Fountain of all this must be Attention, Contemplation, or a close Application of the Mind to the moral Truth, Reason, and Fitness of Things. This is the first Spring and Origin of all moral Virtue, Religion, and true Happiness. But to avoid this strict Attention and Application of Mind to moral Truth and Reason, as too painful and laborious, Mankind have been generally befriended with several learned, mechanical Schemes and Systems of Faith and Religion, which they might easily learn and practise without understanding, and thereby be made very good and gracious, without being wise or reasonable. By this Method, a competent Stock of mechanical Faith, and a sufficient Number of mechanical Rituals, will constitute a very good, mechanical Religion: In which any personal Defects of moral Truth and Righteousness may be made up, and balanced by the Redundancy of Christ's Righteousness imputed to us, and placed to our Account, as effectually to all Intents and Purposes, as if we had been the personal Subjects of it ourselves.

But I know it would signify nothing to explode Falshood and Error, without setting up and settling the contrary Truth in its Room; this, therefore, I shall endeavour to do as briefly and clearly as I can. You may observe then, that the An-

tients call'd moral Philosophy, or the Religion of Nature, in its Theory and Practice, *Wisdom*, emphatically, and to distinguish it from all other Sorts of human Knowledge and Learning, which they look'd upon, comparatively, as of little Consequence or Value. This was the Plan or Scheme of Religion, which *Solomon*, and the Author of the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, laid down and proceeded on; and this is the Genius that inspired and animated *St. Paul* in all his Writings, and which he calls *the Spirit of Christ, the spiritual Mind, the new Man, or new Creature, Christ within us the Hope of Glory, the Law or Rule of Faith, and the Grace of God manifested by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, &c.* Which Metaphors are all very strong and beautiful when rightly understood and apply'd, but this can never be done in the mechanical Way of Faith and Religion, nor till they are brought to the Test of moral Philosophy. Now the Principles of this Philosophy, divine Wisdom, or spiritual Knowledge, are not in themselves remote, abstruse, or at all difficult, but levelled to the Understandings of Mankind in general; and the Study and Practice of it requires nothing more than Men's impartially attending to, and following the Dictates and Guidance of their own Reason and Consciences, against any Bent or Bias of the bodily or merely animal Appetites and Passions to the contrary;

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for these are two opposite and contrary Principles of Action in the Mind of Man, namely, the rational Pleasure, Affection and Passion resulting from the Contemplation and Love of Truth, moral Fitness, intellectual Beauty, Order and Proportion on the one Hand; or the brutal, animal Pleasure, Affection or Passion in the Gratification of the bodily Senses, Appetites, and Inclinations on the other. This internal Character of moral Truth and Righteousness, and a constant, uniform Life, or Course of Action, flowing from it, and directed by it, every one will allow to be the Religion of the End; or at least there can be no Dispute about it among Protestants: But what those Means are which are necessary to this End, and without which the End cannot be obtain'd at all, or not without great Difficulty and Hazard, has been always a disputable Point among Christians of every Denomination, and still remains so to this Day. The modern Papists, indeed, who suppose all Matters of Faith and Religion to be equally necessary, could never distinguish between the Religion of the End, and of the Means, in the common Acceptation of it with us: But the Protestants found themselves obliged to it from a Distinction which they had made before, between Fundamentals and Non-Fundamentals, or between Things necessary and not necessary in Matters of Faith and Religion.

But I shall leave these Gentlemen to compound and settle the Matter, as well as they can between themselves, and in the mean while endeavour to shew, that there is a just and rational Distinction between the Religion of the End, and the Religion of the Means; and that in this Case, the Means are as necessary as the End, for otherwise they could be no Means at all in Contradistinction to any Thing else. *Unnecessary Means* are fit only for an *unnecessary Religion*, and they that will have one, ought to be content with the other.

But when Men have done disputing about Religion, and said as much as they can, I will still maintain, that the Means of acquiring this moral Philosophy, divine Wisdom, or Art of living well, are the very same with the Means of obtaining any other practical Knowledge in any other Art or Science whatever; and without using the natural, and only necessary Means, it will be impossible, in this Case, or any other, ever to come at the End, unless God would alter the common Course of Nature and Providence, and teach Men to know and do Things in a miraculous Way, without their own Concurrence and Endeavours.

A Man, who would obtain the Knowledge, and make himself Master of any Art or Science, must apply his Mind to it with Attention and Diligence, continually and at
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all proper Times put it in Practice, so far as he has acquir'd it, and in the mean while take himself off from all such Avocations to other Business or Pleasures, that would hinder his main Pursuit, and be inconsistent with the End which he proposes. This, which is necessary in all Acquisitions of Knowledge and Practice, is here likewise necessary, and the only Thing that is necessary in the Case before us. The first Thing necessary to this Wisdom, divine Science, or moral Philosophy, is Self-Acquaintance. A Man must thoroughly study, and understand himself, before he can know any Thing else to any good Purpose. He must understand his own Nature, Constitution and Frame, as a reasonable and sensitive Creature; what the different Ends and Uses are of his Reason, Understanding, and intellectual Powers on the one Hand, and of his external Senses, Appetites, and Passions on the other; what Relation he stands in to his Fellow-Creatures, who are of the same Make and Composition; how far he depends on them, or they upon him, and what he would expect from them upon a supposed Change of Persons and Circumstances. He who imagines he knows the World, and pretends to be acquainted with Mankind, while he is a Stranger to himself, is grossly mistaken, and can never know the World half so well, as the World will know him:

But in this Self-Contemplation, a Man will find an infinite, inexhaustible Source and Spring of Wisdom and Knowledge: When he considers the natural Constitution of his Mind, the various and different Faculties, Affections, Appetites, and Passions, both internal or intellectual, and external or sensible, with which he is endued; the wonderful Structure, Organization, and Mechanism of his Body in all its Parts and Members; and the necessary, mutual Relation of all these to one another, contrived and adjusted for the Good and Self-Preservation of the whole compound System.

Let our Moralist now look without him, and contemplate the vast stupendous Fabrick of the Heavens and Earth; and here on this Globe in which he lives, he will see an innumerable Family of Creatures raised up and provided for, by an unseen Hand, and contrived and placed in a mutual Dependence on, and a necessary Relation to each other, by an invisible, unsearchable Wisdom. And when he carries his Sight farther by the Help of Microscopes, and penetrates a little deeper than the mere Surface of Things, so as to see something of their internal Structures and Constitution, he will still discover more and more Wonders *in Infinitum*, and be more and more charmed and delighted with new Beauty, Order, and Proportion. And then, the Contemplation of the vast
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expanded Heavens about him, of the numberless and vast Globes, or celestial Bodies, which here revolve about their proper Centers, and act upon each other, by the most exact, constant, and uniform Laws of Order, Proportion, and divine Geometry; this, I say, must still enlarge the Views, and heighten the Pleasure of our Moral Philosopher, and at the same Time increase his Thirst, and strengthen his Desire after more and more of these intellectual Delights. And when he has been thus charm'd with this intellectual Beauty, and felt the inlightening, invigorating Influences of Wisdom upon his Soul, he will despise all the inferior, gross, and brutal Pleasures of the idly busy, and distracted World, and will find, by Experience, that Wisdom owns and justifies her Children, and makes a much better Provision for their Happiness, than any of the low, groveling Slaves to Ambition, Sense and Appetite can boast of. But besides, this Study, and such Contemplations as these, must necessarily carry our Moralist higher, to the Origin, prime Agent, and universal Cause of all this; for when he sees that the whole Universe is one intire Piece, and one perfect Machine, in which every Part has a necessary Relation to, and Dependence upon the Whole, he must needs bethink himself of some common Architect, Contriver, and Director, or of some universal Power and A-

gency join'd with Intelligence, Wisdom, and Contrivance, which at first design'd, projected, and effected the whole System, and which still continues to inspect, govern, and actuate the Whole. Unless a Man enters into this Thought, he cannot, in Reality, think at all; or at least he cannot think in a Way that will bear Reasoning, or that will enable him to prove or disprove any Thing: For a Man may as well suppose himself to be independent, self-existent, and necessary, as any Thing within his Observation and View to be so. And therefore he must allow some one universal, self-existent, and independent Mind, indued with all Power and Knowledge, as first producing and still governing and directing all Things; or else he may as well suppose himself, and every Thing else, to be eternal, necessarily existent, and independent, without any one independent Cause, and Dirigent of Nature at all, *i. e.* that an universal Effect may be supposed without an universal Cause, that Unity of Design may be supposed without Unity of Judgment, or which is the same Thing, that every Thing may exist without any Cause or Reason at all; and this is the last Resort of Atheists, who have either no Reason at all, or who dare not use it in Opposition to their carnal Interests and Pleasures.

But I must here correct myself, and own, that there is a Character in Life, which cannot

not be confined to any certain Rules or Measures, either of Reason or Interest, Religion or Atheism: Some Men affect to be nothing steadily, but every Thing by Turns. Vain-glory governs them; they aim at nothing but Victory, or the last Word in Debate; and if they can but obtain that, they are as great as they can be, or would ever desire.

Sophronius is a Man, who has a Smattering of every Thing, but understands nothing: He has a tolerable good Memory, a little Judgment, a great deal of Vanity, but no Honesty. *Sophronius* has no certain, settled Opinion of his own, but assumes all Opinions, and argues for and against every Thing, as Occasion serves. He has, however, this settled Principle, to contradict every Body in Conversation, when he thinks he is not too much over-match'd, and cannot be much expos'd; by which, as he imagines, he maintains an Opinion of his Superiority, and secures to himself the most shining Character in the Club.

If you should venture to give your Opinion about the Nature, Formation and Constitution of a Cheese-Cake, or a Black-Pudding, *Sophronius* would break in upon you, and endeavour to prove, by a fluent Harangue of Half an Hour, or more, as the Company would give Leave, that you are grossly mistaken, that you know nothing of the Matter, and that he has heard the most expert

expert and learned in that Way give a different Judgment. In short, *Sophronius* is always sure to contradict you, and almost as sure to be in the Wrong; but when this happens, the most certain Thing of all is, that he will never own it. *Sophronius*, however, is a very genteel and well-bred Man, and will always thank you for yielding to him; but if you cannot do this, it is for Want of Manners, and *Sophronius* cannot be your Friend.

But to return from this Digression to my Moral Philosopher: When by the foregoing Reasonings he comes to know himself, and the World about him, and to connect this universal System of Nature, with an universal Mind, as the all-wise and all-powerful Creator, Governor, and Dirigent of the Whole; he can hardly forbear addressing himself to him in some such Manner as this. O thou eternal Reason, Father of Light, and immense Fountain of all Truth and Goodness; suffer me, with the deepest Humility and Awe, to apply to, and petition thee as my Maker, Informer, and Preserver, from whom I have deriv'd this compound Being of Mind and organiz'd Matter, and upon whom I must necessarily depend for the Preservation of it, or any farther Degrees of Perfection and Happiness in Futurity. I could not have existed, or acted at first, or have been ever capable of knowing, or doing

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ing any Thing at all, but by a Communication from the supreme, eternal, independent Mind, upon whom I must likewise equally and necessarily depend for the Continuation of this Existence, and for all the possible, successive Affections and Modifications of Being. I own, therefore, O Father of Spirits, this natural, necessary Dependence upon thy constant, universal Presence, Power, and Agency. Take me under the constant, uninterrupted Protection and Care of thy divine Wisdom, Benignity, and All-sufficiency: Continue to irradiate my Understanding with the Beams of immutable, eternal Reason. Let this infallible Light from Heaven inform and teach me from Time to Time, and under all Circumstances, how to govern and direct my inferior, animal Senses, Appetites, and Passions; or if these should occasionally misguide me, if I should err from the Way of Truth, and wander in the Dark, instruct me by a fatherly Correction; let Pains or Sorrows fetch me home, and teach me Wisdom; but leave me not to my inferior, animal Self. Suffer not Appetite and blind Impulse to over-rule and direct me, but for ever bless me with the enlightening, felicitating Influences of thy benign Presence, Power, and Love; so shall my Happiness, O heavenly Father, be conterminate with my Existence, and my whole Being an everlasting Monument to thy Praise and Glory.

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This seems to be the most natural Method of studying Wisdom, or moral Philosophy, and the most rational Way of addressing God, and owning our Dependence on the supreme Being. But while a Man is acquiring this divine Science, and confirming himself in the Practice of it, he must take Care not to defeat his own Intention; he must call in his wandering Mind, and suffer himself to be sometimes at home; he must curb, and restrain his irregular, exorbitant Desires; he must deny his carnal Self, and bear off from any Business or Pleasure, that would be inconsistent with his main End; and though a Man may possibly find this a little difficult at first, and attended with some Reluctancy, yet the Harvest will abundantly repay the Labour, and he will never repent him of his Pains. If any one should here ask, how he may surmount these Difficulties, and obtain the End? I answer; that he must set about it, and resolve upon it in the Method proposed, whatever it may cost him; without which he can never obtain the Knowledge and Practice of this, or any Thing else: But then, as I was saying, every Victory thus gain'd over the Appetites and Passions, yields the Mind an unspeakable Pleasure; and while a Man is thus laying in a Fund of Happiness, and making Provision for all Futurity, he has his Account in his Hand, and pays nothing but for Value receiv'd; for abstract-

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ing from all farther Considerations, the wise, virtuous, and good Man, is certainly the rich, honourable, and happy Man in this World; he wants no Pleasures worthy of his Nature, or that can turn him to any real Advantage: The Gratifications which he denies himself of are, perhaps, only momentary; or, at most, but very short, and such as could leave nothing behind them, but a lasting Sting, Remorse, and Reproach, as the just Reward of abusing Reason; in which a Man only arms all his Senses, Appetites and Passions against himself, and creates more Devils within him, than there are in Hell. And this is a very great Piece of Wisdom, no doubt. It is the peculiar Happiness of *great Men*, and such as is justly enough stiled the *Wisdom of this World*. But a Student in this Philosophy, ought to abstract his Thoughts, as much as he can, from the deceiving Colourings, and outward gaudy Appearances of Wealth and Power, Lust and Appetite, Ambition and Sensuality; he must withdraw himself, upon all proper Occasions, from the Noise, Hurry, and Bustle of the World about him, and retire into the silent Solitude of his own Mind, there to advise and consult in all difficult Cases with his cool impartial Reason. When a Man does this, he converses with God; he derives Communications of Light and Knowledge from the eternal Father and Fountain of it; he receives

ceives Intelligence and Information from eternal Wisdom, and hears the clear intelligible Voice of his Maker and Former speaking to his silent, undisturb'd, attentive Reason. But let a Man take any other Method for Information in Matters of Faith and Religion; let him seek it in Books among the Historians, Expository Criticks and Sermonizers of this or any other Age, and he will meet with nothing but Confusion and Distraction, a *Babel* of Faith and Religion, an infinite Number of different irreconcilable Opinions and contending Parties, in which the World has been darkened and inflamed by the charitable, useful Labours of the Learned. But might one not rather send Men to the Heavens and to the Earth, or especially to the brute Creatures, to learn Reason, Virtue and Religion?

Theoph. I have heard you out, *Philaethes*, under this Head of Discourse, not only with Patience, but, as I must own, with a great deal of Pleasure. I see there is a Sort of Enthusiasm, which you not only allow, but naturally run into, and cannot help it. But, before this Argument can come to be more thoroughly and impartially considered and weighed, there is one Account which I would willingly adjust with you, and that is with relation to the *Christian Clergy*: You give them no Quarter; you rally them indiscriminately; nay, you are often pleased to go
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out of your Way to come at them. But what should be the Meaning of this? Is the very Order essentially wrong, or do you think all Clergymen to be Fools or Knaves alike? I have the Honour to know many of them, and of different Denominations, whom I take to be very honest and learned Men, and who are as much against all Priestcraft, Church Tyranny, and implicit Faith, as you can be. You ought, therefore, to make these Gentlemen, as well as the rest of Mankind, some Allowances, unless you think, that they are all naturally, or in Virtue of their Office, at least, biased against Truth and Religion, and that the Character itself ought not to be supported or maintain'd.

Philal. I agree with you in Opinion about the Clergy of different Denominations; my Acquaintance among them has, perhaps, been more extensive than yours; and, therefore, I must at least have met with as many wise and honest Men of this Function and Character. And I can assure you, that I am far from thinking that the Character itself has any Thing in it inconsistent with Reason or Religion. But this I think, and must say, that it is a more difficult Thing for a Clergyman to be wise and honest, than for any other Man to be so; and, therefore, I have always look'd with the greatest Compassion upon the wise and honest Part of the Cler-

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gy; and think they are under greater Difficulties; in this Case, than any other Set of Men. The wisest and best Men among the Clergy of every Denomination, are under the greatest Difficulties and Discouragements in studying the Scriptures, and in all their Theological Inquiries. Their several Schemes and Systems of Faith, have been long ago fix'd and settled to their Hands, by much wiser and better Men; and they are not, under the greatest Pains and Penalties, to understand the Scriptures in any other Sense: For either national Establishments, enforced by penal Laws and negative Discouragements, or at least the Schemes and Systems of separate, Dissenting Parties, have pinn'd them down, and left them to think honestly, or talk freely at their Peril. Among the separate, tolerated Parties, every grey-headed Dogmatist, and every well-instructed, catechized old Woman, can teach the Minister, or Pastor of the Congregation, what Doctrines he is to preach, and how far he is to study, or in what Sense he must understand the Scriptures. But the national, establish'd Clergy, are every where upon much the best Foot of mechanical Faith, and historical Religion; since as they are happily exempted from all the Trouble of thinking, or reasoning about the Truths contained either in Nature or Scripture, so they are not under the same Necessity of submitting their Understandings
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and Consciences to any inferior Guidance from the weakest of the common People. And yet I take this last Case, hard as it is, to be better and more promising, than the former: For it may be barely possible to make People wiser, who can gain nothing by their Ignorance or Folly; but it is morally impossible, and requires irresistible Grace, to convert Men from their own Interest, or to make them believe, that Gain can ever be inconsistent with Godliness, or that Church Wealth and Power is not true Religion. It is hardly possible to forbear laughing at the seeming, dissembled Zeal of the Clergy in general, for Rites, Ceremonies, historical Faith, positive Laws, and the decisive Judgments of the Learned, or the Powerful, in Matters of Religion; and yet, when you come to reflect a little, and consider the Matter, there is nothing in it. You might at first imagine, that they had nothing more at Heart than Religion, and that they thought the external, ritual Part of it the main Thing; but you would mistake these Gentlemen very much, if you should think them in earnest: No, Sir; they all know better, whatever you may think or believe; for there is not one in ten of them, but would prefer a good Sincure to a Living of the same Value, encumbered with Rites, Ceremonies, and Services, or clogg'd with the Care of Souls.

I would appeal to the Clergy themselves, especially to those of them who are the most zealous for Rites, Ceremonies, and Party Schemes, whether this be not true. I would ask them a Question now, which they must expect to be examin'd upon another Day, if they believe any Thing of what they preach; and which is this, Whether they ever mean any Thing by the *Church*, which has been so often in *Danger*, but their own separate, secular Wealth and Power, which has been always dangerous, and very often destructive to States and Kingdoms? Let them lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and tell me conscientiously, and in the Fear of God, whether this be so or not. If, therefore, *Deism*, or the *Religion of God and Nature*, should now at last prevail; if the Laity should begin to laugh at, and despise what the Clergy have hitherto call'd *divine Faith*, and upon which they have grounded all their Anathema's and damnatory Creeds, to the distracting of Mankind, and setting the World about them on fire; they themselves are to look to it, since they alone must have the Praise or Blame of it, as the Matter should chance to turn up: But Thanks be to Heaven, that I have liv'd to see the Time, even in *Christendom*, when the Laity in general have no great Courage or Resolution left for these *religious Wars*, in which their disinterested Leaders have al-

ways

ways engaged them with Rashness and Precipitation, but never brought them off with Honour or Safety.

Theoph. I think, upon the Whole, that you ought to distinguish between *Priestcraft* and *Priesthood*, and not to destroy a good Thing because you do not like a bad one.

Philal. Sir, I do distinguish between these; but the only Question is, How to separate or divide them, and to take Priests off from Priestcraft? How can you expect Truth, fair Reasonings, and impartial Judgment, from the Clergy of any Denomination, while their Interest lies on the other Side? I am not setting aside the Order itself, either here or elsewhere, nor should I ever propose or aim at it, was it ever so much in my Power; but I would have you consider with me, how to prevent the ill Consequences which have hitherto, and always will attend it, without some effectual Remedy; and this, let me tell you, must be a Remedy proportioned to the Disease, and not any of the palliative Methods hitherto thought of and attempted.

Theoph. You think, then, perhaps, that the Sore is rankled so deep, and the Gangrene got so far, that nothing can be effectual but Amputation.

Philal. This is the last Resort, indeed, and the only Way of preserving the Whole in desperate Cases; but I would hope, that

some easier and gentler Method might be thought of; for I would not part with so necessary a Function, and so useful a Member of the Body Politick as the Church. In short, therefore, I think that the State ought not to destroy, but to govern the Church, and keep the Bishops, and their Clergy, so far under Subjection, as never to stand in fear of them. A political Church, in every Nation where there is one, can be only a State Machine, or Engine of Civil Government. It is, therefore, the highest Arrogance and Insolence in the Clergy to claim an apostolical or divine Right, for any such *political Creature or Ordinance of Man*. And to say, that Laws made for the Benefit of the *Church*, or *Clergy*, are unalterable, and that it must be dangerous to the State to diminish, or restrain this Ecclesiastical Fund of Wealth and Power, is the greatest Insult upon Reason and common Sense of any in the World, as it is contrary to the constant, universal Experience of Mankind. Nothing has ever more endangered, or oftener ruin'd States and Kingdoms, than the *Power* of the *Church*. The Church and State are two such antagonist Forces, or counter Powers, that like the opposite Arms of a Balance, the one always rises proportionally as the other sinks. If this Observation does not hold good in all Ages and Countries, from the Beginning of the World to this Day, I should be glad to be

be convicted and better inform'd: But especially, I should be infinitely pleas'd to receive any farther Light and Instruction from the Christian Clergy, who are most of all concern'd to acquit themselves in this Particular, as having, more than any others, divided, weakened, and embroil'd the several States and Kingdoms, to which they have belong'd, and where ever they have obtain'd any considerable Quantity and Proportion of Wealth and Power.

It is, indeed, very fit and reasonable, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel, *quam diu se bene gesserint*, or as long as they behave well, adorn their holy Function, and answer the Ends of their ministerial Office, by promoting Peace, Unity, and Charity in the World, upon the Foot of Reason and Virtue, which is the Religion of God and Nature; and whether or no, or how far they do this, the Christian People, who entrust them with the Care of their Souls, are the true and only Judges; and this Christian and natural Right of Judgment, I will venture to pronounce original and divine.

Theoph. You have opened yourself so far about the Christian Clergy, that I am almost of your Mind, tho' I cannot agree with you concerning Christianity itself. I know, indeed, no governing Power among Men but Civil Power; and which, I think, ought al-

ways to be in the Hands of the Civil Magistrate, and that this Power, which is every where the same, ought never to be divided under the senseless and unintelligible Distinction of Civil and Ecclesiastical Power; if a Government should think fit to entrust Ecclesiasticks, or Clergymen, with Civil Power, I should have no Objection against this, provided the Persons thus entrusted were equally honest and capable, and employ'd their Civil Power only to Civil Ends and Purposes.

Philal. You say right; but have you ever known the Church entrusted with Civil Power, which she has not employ'd to separate Church Uses, and directed it to such Ends and Purposes as relate more to the separated, divided, or independent Interest of the Clergy, than to the common Good of the whole Community?

Theoph. Your Question, I must own, is very home, and I cannot say, that I have ever known or heard of any such Thing. It is very plain, that the Interest of the *Church*, or Clergy, has not been the Interest of the *State*; and if it should sometimes happen so, it can be only by Chance, and not from any necessary Connexion. There can be no Occasion, therefore, to dispute a Thing farther, in which we are both agreed; but still the Question is, not what the Clergy are, or have been, but what they ought to be, and whether

ther they can now preach or justify Christianity upon your Scheme of it?

Philal. This would only introduce a *Lis de Nomine*; if the Clergy mean the same Thing by Christianity, or the Doctrine of Christ, that I do, they will be able to justify it upon my Scheme; but if they mean any other, or different Religion, perhaps they may not be able to defend it, either upon my Principles or their own. By Christianity, I mean that complete System of moral Truth and Righteousness, Justice and Charity, which, as the best Transcript of the Religion of Nature, was preach'd to the World by Christ and the Apostles, as the Rule of Equity and Rectitude, by which Men were to be rewarded or punished in the final Judgment by God himself, as the most powerful, wise, and righteous Creator, Governor, and Judge of the World. This I take to be original, real, and indisputable Christianity; the great and peculiar Excellency of which lies in this, that it restores the eternal, immutable Rule of moral Rectitude, or the Religion of God and Nature, after it had been darken'd, confounded, and almost lost amidst the gross Ignorance, Idolatry, and Superstition of Mankind in general, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*. But then I cannot think it of equal Importance and Necessity, to believe every Thing that was afterwards reported concerning this great Prophet, who had newly reviv'd and

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publish'd the original and only true Religion: But his Disciples and Followers soon fell into very odd Notions about him, and reported several Things of him, that were neither consistent with his Character and general Design, nor with the Religion which he had preach'd and propagated. They interpolated, added, and altered several Passages in the original Books, which seem'd to represent this Prophet as the same Person, or the same Being with the supreme God; and they ascribed several Miracles to him, in which there could have been only an Exertion of Power, without Wisdom or Goodness. In short, they soon patch'd up a Religion very different from that of Nature, join'd *Judaism* and *Christianity* together, and in Favour of their old, national Prejudices, made Christ himself a false Prophet. They made him prophesy of the End of the World, and of his second Coming to Judgment, as a Thing very shortly to happen during that present Generation. In a Word, they understood and reported every Thing that he said, according to their own Prejudices and false Opinions concerning the Messias; and having waited for near a Century, and found themselves mistaken, they set up another Messias. One *Barchochab*, stopt all their Conversions to Christianity, and raised a fresh Rebellion against the *Romans*, which prov'd the final Dissolution of their State and Nation. If we consider,

therefore, by whom and upon what Principles the Canon of Scripture, as we now have it, was at first collected, revis'd, and published, it is no Wonder if it leans strongly towards *Judaism*, and seems, at first Sight, to connect two opposite and contradictory Religions one with another; for no two Religions in the World can be more inconsistent and irreconcilable, than *Judaism* and *Christianity*; and yet if a Man reads the *New Testament* as a plain, historical, and uncorrupted Account of Things, without any critical Remarks upon the State of Religion, and the Circumstances of that Time, he might be tempted to imagine, that *Judaism* and *Christianity* are both one and the same Religion, or at least have a necessary Dependence on, and Connexion with each other; for no *Jew*, at that Time, would ever have embraced the Religion of Jesus, but upon the old Foundation of the Prophets, that the Messiah should restore the Kingdom of *Israel* to the House of *David*, in an everlasting Succession of Power and Dominion over all Nations, to the End of the World. And, therefore, when he was crucify'd and put to Death, and all their Hopes were cut off, of his *restoring the Kingdom* at that Time, they expected his second Coming in that very Age or Generation, with all the Powers of Heaven to effect this. And this is plainly what the Angel is said to have promised to the Virgin, and which has certainly

certainly never yet been made good, and in all Probability never will be; and as the *Jews* at first embraced the Religion of Jesus upon this Principle, and could never have receiv'd it upon any other, so Christianity itself could never have been propagated beyond the Boundaries of *Judea*, or the *Jerusalem* Dialect of the *Syriac* Tongue, had it not been for St. *Paul*, who had much greater Learning, and proceeded upon more Catholick Principles, than all the rest. The Books of the *New Testament*, therefore, ought to be read critically, with an Allowance for Persons, Circumstances, and the Situation of Things at that Time; and not taken in gross, as if every Thing contain'd in them had been at first infallibly inspired from God, and no Corruptions could have ever since happen'd to them. But, in short, what has been observ'd, is, perhaps, sufficient to shew the Necessity of distinguishing between the *moral* and *positive* Parts of Christianity; the one could never have been corrupted and altered, but the Cheat must have appear'd to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind: But as the other might easily be mistaken or misrepresented at first, so it is still capable of almost any Construction or Interpretation, according to Mens different Interests, Passions, and preconceiv'd Opinions; and accordingly we find, that this has been actually the Case, and that to this Day there are not any two Sects, or

Parties, who can agree about any one System, or Scheme, of what they call positive, instituted Religion, or the Religion of the Means, while yet they are all agreed about the End itself. But to rest the eternal Salvation of Mankind upon such a Bottom as this, is to make it either absolutely unattainable, or at least very uncertain and precarious upon the Christian Scheme. We have all found, *Theophanes*, the blind, furious Zealots of all Parties, in contending for what they call Revelation, very free with their mutual Curses, Excommunications, and Anathema's, and continually laying about them, with all the Powers of eternal Death and Damnation, upon one another: But herein, by an Insolence not to be parallel'd in any other Case, they only sanctify and spiritualize their own Interests and Passions with the holy Name of God, and a most profane and senseless Pretence of Religion; for I would challenge all, or any of them, to name me any one single Point of Inspiration, or mere Revelation, in which they are agreed, or which they do not differently understand and interpret, as much as any two different and contrary Doctrines in the World. But while Men are contending eternally about Things necessary and fundamental, by positive Institution, which they all own to be very plain and clear in Scripture, it is evident, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, that they have no certain

Rule

Rule or Standard of Faith at all in these Matters, and that every Church or Society, and perhaps every private Man, must in this Way be left to make their own instituted Fundamentals for themselves; as in Effect they do, while they can never agree in the same Sense of Things, even where they use the same Words. And I may venture to say, that was this Matter once settled and agreed on, there could remain no farther Doubts or Disputes about Religion; and that the Point can never be settled, nor the religious Peace of Mankind ever established upon a rational Foundation, as long as the Necessity or Fundamentality of such mere positive Laws and Institutes shall be allow'd at all. Nothing, perhaps, of this Sort has been more generally receiv'd and adher'd to, than the Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction, or the Necessity of his Death, as a Propitiation for Sin, and the principal Ground of our Acceptance with God; and yet, I think, I have said enough to subvert and destroy this Hypothesis, under all the Appearances and Constructions of it, among our several Schematists and Faith-Mongers. And if this will not hold, I should be glad to try their Strength upon any Thing else of the same Nature and Kind.

Theoph. I hope you have now almost talk'd yourself out, or at least you have furnish'd me with Matter enough for farther Consideration. I cannot, upon the Whole, own myself

self convinced; but I must own, that you have offered many Things, which I had not duly weigh'd, and which will be the Subject of my closer and more retired Thoughts, as Opportunities shall offer. I had told you before, that I was not sufficiently provided for such a Debate, especially in the Length to which you have carry'd it. And, therefore, if you should ever think fit to publish what has pass'd between us, our Readers ought not to conclude, that my Objections contain the whole Strength of the Argument against you. You will, doubtless, meet with much abler Adversaries than myself, and to these I must refer you, or at least beg your Dismission at present, to a more convenient Season.

Philal. I see I have already trespassed on your Patience, and therefore am willing to relieve you at present; but otherwise this Subject had not been half brought to a Conclusion; for it would remain still to consider the Civil and Ecclesiastical State and Constitution of the *Jewish* Nation, or People of *Israel*, as first settled and established by *Moses*: What political Principles that Legislator acted upon; and what their natural Consequences were from first to last: What Powers, Prerogatives, and Immunities the High Priest, Chief Priests, and *Levites* had by Law; and what Use they made of them: How their first grand priestly Oracle, by *Urim* and *Thummim*, came to be set up, and his oracular
Answers

Answers receiv'd as the infallible Voice of God; and by what Means, or from what Occasions this Oracle afterwards fell into Disgrace, and was set aside: Upon what Principles and Views the School of *Naioth* was set up by *Samuel*, Father and Founder of these Academick Prophets; what were the principal Maxims, Studies, and Way of Living, to be observ'd and follow'd by such as were taken in upon this Foundation; and what Use they made of it among the People: By what Means, or from what Occasions, this Order of Prophets came at last to be rejected and cast off, after they had maintain'd their Authority and Reputation with the People for almost 700 Years; wherein the Principles, Maxims, and State Policy of the Priests and Prophets agreed or differed; and what Convulsions and Revolutions of the State hereupon happened from Time to Time: In what Respects these Prophets, in their original Institution and Foundation, were intended as a Check upon the Regal Power; and by what Means they afterwards destroyed that Power, enslaved their Country, and were set aside, and dissolv'd themselves: From what Occasions, and by what Incidents, that great Change in Religion was introduced among the *Jews*, by which they quitted their Idolatry, and embraced the Doctrines of the Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection of the Body, a final Judgment, and a future State of Rewards
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and Punishments for good and bad Men. After the *Jews* had receiv'd these Doctrines from the *Persian Magians*, they never relaps'd into Idolatry more, but suffer'd Martyrdom for their Religion, with the same Constancy, Zeal, and Firmness that the Christians have done since. From the Days of *Moses* to this Time, which was a Period of about 1100 Years, this whole Nation had been deistical Materialists, or *Sadducees*, as they were call'd afterwards, and had been never known to suffer any Thing for Religion, because they had no future Expectation that could make them amends for it. And here it might be easily prov'd, that the *Sadducees*, in the Days of Christ and the Apostles, were not a new or modern Sect lately sprung up among them, but the true Remains of the antient *Jews*, who stuck to the Principles of their great Lawgiver *Moses*, as contain'd in the *Pentateuch*, and would not own the Authority of any Prophets after him; in Consequence of which they own'd the Being of a God, and his providential Government of the World, but deny'd the Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection, or any future State. And here it might also be consider'd, upon what Views and Motives the *Jews*, about the Time of the *Maccabees*, so grossly corrupted and interpolated all their Books, which had been written after the *Babylonish* Captivity, cutting off at least 140
Years

Years under the *Persian* Monarchy, thereby confounding all History and Chronology during that Period, and placing many of their famous Men so much higher or earlier, than the Age in which they really lived and flourished; such as the Prophets *Daniel* and *Ezdras*, *Ezra*, the Scribes *Nebemiah*, *Mordecai*, and others. It might be easily prov'd, that this was really true in Fact, and that it could not have been done from Ignorance, Inadvertency, or Oversight. Such Inquiries as these, with other incidental Matters, that would naturally fall under Consideration, might open us into a large Field of entertaining and useful Speculations. But as this Debate must now break off, what remains may, perhaps, be at some Time hereafter the Subject of another Conference between us.

Theoph. I must own, that many Things you have here hinted at, appear very novel and surprizing to me; but how well you can make them out, must be left to the Event in Time. However, I can now only stay to dine with you, and then must presently take Horse, since the Journey, you know, will require the greater Part of the Afternoon.

Philal. I can by no Means consent to your Motion of going home to Day; and to prevent it as much as possible, I have engaged two of my Friends to dine and spend their Evening with us; in whose Conversation I doubt not but you will be highly delighted.

One

One of them is *Agricola*, a Country Farmer about a Mile off. He farms two hundred a Year of his own Estate, and rents above two hundred more. He is a Man of plain, natural, honest Sense, who has never had his Mind corrupted and tainted with School Divinity, Church Schemes, or any Sort of false Learning; a sober, virtuous Free-Thinker, and a Person perfectly well form'd for Friendship and good Neighbourhood, without any Thing of Stiffness or Formality about him.

The other is *Eusebius*, the Rector of our Parish. His Place is worth to him about one hundred and fifty Pounds a Year, upon which he is a very good Oeconomist, and remarkable for his Charity to the Poor. He lives in a perfect Harmony, and good Understanding with his Parishioners; and there is not a Man among them, but would rather give him two Tithe Sheaves, than cheat him of one. He is a Gentleman of a graceful Presence, and good Address, with a ready Wit, and lively Imagination. He has a Fund of solid Learning, without Pedantry or Ostentation; Religion, without Superstition; and Catholicism free from Party Interest, or any of the common Foibles of his Order. In short, he has all the personal Qualifications, which are necessary to render the Conversation of a Clergyman both entertaining and instructive. This, Sir, will be your Company, and therefore you must not, and cannot think of leaving

ing us till To-Morrow; but see, *Theophanes*, here they are just entering at the Gate-House, and for my own Part, I know no greater Pleasure, than what I expect for the Remainder of this Day. But I must go and receive them, and shall venture to bid them welcome in your Name, as well as my own.

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